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NAVY RECORDS SOCIETY
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VOL. IV.

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PRIVATE PAPERS

OF

George, second Earl Spencer

FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY

1794-1801

EDITED BY

REAR-ADMIRAL H. W. RICHMOND.

VOL. IV.



PRINTED FOR THE NAVY RECORDS SOCIETY

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PART I

ST. VINCENT AND HIS
OFFICERS

1799 TO 1800

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

ST. VINCENT'S expressions of opinion of his officers are so characteristic that although some of them have appeared in Tucker and elsewhere they have been included here. St. Vincent's judgment was not infallible—his view that Nelson was a partisan and no more is a well-known example—but it is impossible to doubt that this wise, shrewd and observant old Commander's opinions are true pictures, with just that touch of exaggeration of some of the more prominent characteristics which an artist tends to employ in his portraiture. But even when severe he finds a place in his descriptions for qualifications in an officer's favour. His long experience has shown him that perfection is not to be looked for, and that the best must be made of the good qualities possessed by the officers he has under his command. One quality, however, he constantly finds lacking—that of the power to take responsibility. Such a sentence as 'he is not made to stand under anything like responsibility; it is lamentable to reflect how few men are,'¹ recurs in different forms, but with the same note of lament, in a number of his letters. How highly he esteemed the power of taking responsibility, and how essential a quality in an officer he considered it, cannot fail to be appreciated by readers of his letters, particularly that intimate correspondence he conducted with his great friend the Secretary of the Admiralty, Nepean.

His criticisms were not confined to his officers at sea; they extended to the Admiralty and Navy Board. Certain of the work of the latter is 'dull insipid business,

¹ St. Vincent to Nepean, 8th September, 1800.

fit for Scotch pack-horses'—alluding to Middleton and Patton. His opinion of the Scotch as sea-officers is sweeping: 'You will never find an officer, native of that country, figure in supreme command, they are only fit for drudgery. Lord Keith is by far the best I ever met with by land or sea.'¹ He despised and disliked the three seamen then on the Admiralty Board—Gambier, Young and Man; so much that on the 28th June he wrote that 'it will very soon come to pass that I shall tell Lord Spencer bluntly, if Admiral Young continues at the Admiralty Board I will cease to command the Channel Fleet. It is incomprehensible to me why he keeps more than one seaman at the Board, for they do nothing but confound, impede and distract. The only use of a seaman there is to survey men for Greenwich Hospital, and any Yellow Admiral will perform that as well as the best of them. The fact is that Lord Spencer is now a better officer than any one of the three ever was.' This explosion must, however, be considered as personal to the officers concerned and not as one of a working administrative principle, for when he himself came to the Board he brought two seamen with him, Captains Troubridge and John Markham. The fact was that he had a low opinion of the individuals. He could not bear 'to have my conduct scanned by the incompetent judgment of three such *very* inexperienced officers.' Man and Young 'never knew what discipline was and they never will acquire it; the former from nervous weakness, the latter from conceit and presumption.' For them almost alone he does not seek to find some redeeming points to palliate the bad qualities he attributed to them.

¹ To Nepean, 22nd September, 1800.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

22nd January, 1799.

My dear Lord,— . . . Commissioner Inglefield is an honest man and sufficiently intelligent, but pompous, flowery, indolent and wrapped up in official forms, stay-tape and buckram. He has however corrected many gross and abominable abuses and peculations practised under his predecessor. . . .

Most faithfully yours,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

21st March, 1799.

My dear Lord,—The promotion to the Flag has happily removed a number of officers from the command of ships of the line who at no period of their lives were capable of commanding them ; and I am sorry to have occasion to observe that the present state of the upper part of the list of captains is not much better than it stood before.

.
Yours most truly,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

27th June, 1800.

My dear Lord,— . . . The admirable example my friend Collingwood has set, in getting the *Barfleur* filled up and paid in so short a time, will I hope produce some effect on the captains

of frigates whose dilatory conduct in port annoys me beyond expression. All the married have their wives there, which plays the devil with them, for although the measures I have taken imply a very strong disapprobation, hitherto no advantage has been derived from them. . . .

Yours most faithfully,
St. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Ville de Paris, near Ushant.
17th July, 1800.

My dear Lord,—My *élève* Rear-Admiral Berkeley does not like the Black Rocks where I was obliged to pin him, for though when under sail with an easterly wind he was strictly enjoined to be close in with them at daylight every morning, I generally found him without me: probably not imagining that I was upon deck at 3 o'clock A.M. He is now manœuvring to get to Spithead, and has called his mother-in-law and my old friend Lady Louisa Lennox to his aid, who in a cunning canting letter describes Mrs. Berkeley in such a way that she cannot live without seeing him now and then: to this I have turned the back of my hand, by declaring that while I command the Western Squadron no ship shall go to Spithead unless to dock or shift lower masts.

Since this, Sir John Warren has applied to go to Spithead the latter end of September to look after his interests at Nottingham. I wish very much to serve him upon all occasions, but I entreat the Renown may not be allowed to go to Spithead, though I see no objection to the Rear-Admiral having leave of absence from his

ST. VINCENT AND HIS OFFICERS 7

duty for such time as your Lordship on consideration of his plea may judge fit. . . .

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George, off Ushant.
2nd August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—You will perceive by the enclosed letter from Sir John Warren, that I am not likely to have the benefit of his services at the advanced post long, and looking over the list of Rear-Admirals, I do not find one man there capable of conducting a service of such importance. Sir Robert Calder has neither health nor nerve for it; the Captains Thornborough and Saumarez are the best qualified of any among those on the list of captains likely to be included in the next promotion to the Flag; but I cannot confide such a trust to an officer under the rank of Rear-Admiral, and in truth one man will not be able to go through a winter's work of this trying kind; two at least are absolutely necessary.

Believe me to be, my dear Sir,
Most faithfully yours,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George, near the Black Rocks.
5th August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I very much wish to see Sir Robert Calder's flag hoisted, but to give him the command of the advanced post after the

autumnal equinox would produce his annihilation; the misery he suffered while with me off Toulon, and in other situations is not to be described. Really and truly after Sir Jno. Warren, who neither knows nor fears danger of any kind, Thornborough and Saumarez are the only men within reach I dare confide that post to.

Your Lordship judges perfectly right in keeping Sir Thomas Troubridge until the *Ville de Paris* comes out, for although Captain Domett felt no scruple at first in even serving under Captain Grey, had he been appointed first captain, he has lately altered his tone, and been very fidgety ever since the arrival of the *Culloden*; in all other respects he acquits himself with temper, judgment, and ability, and certainly is an excellent man, and a first-rate officer. If the Civil Department keep pace with Captain Grey, I shall not long be without the *Ville de Paris*.

Yours most truly,

ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George, near the Black Rocks.

5th August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I have the greatest sense of your kindness to me, and the most unbounded confidence in it.

Mr. Tucker has acted like himself in turning his back upon Purser for ever; he is worthy of his great master Nepean, and will, like him, make his way to the first employments by superior talents for business, unremitting diligence, and integrity. If I have a wish in favour of any man to succeed Mr. Purvis, it is Mr. Sedgwick who

was put out of the *Minotaur* upon principle by me. Be assured, my Lord, that no Admiral who thinks and acts rightly will ever unite the characters of secretary and purser, he having the experience I have dearly purchased in Mr. Purvis. There is a person in my secretary's office I very much wish to obtain a purser's warrant for, but if he is placed in a sloop, I shall offend, which I wish to cultivate. His name is Abraham Preston.

Mr. Nepean has a list of very worthy petty officers on board the *Ville de Paris*, in whose advancement I feel greatly interested; he has the best set of Quartermasters I ever saw, several of them fit to be gunners and boatswains of ships of any rate.

To Lieutenant Stupart every praise is due, for the whole merit of the service wherein he was wounded rested with him, although the first lieutenant of the *Success* was the ostensible commander of the boats; having so much to ask for the lieutenants attached to my fortunes, I cannot in justice to them, do more than state the merits of Mr. Stupart.

Believe me to be,

Your Lordship's very faithful and
obedient servant,

ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George, near Ushant.

8th August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Having no frigate or cutter with me I have dispatched the *Ramillies* to apprise Sir Edward Pellew of the fireships.

Sir J. Warren is arrived on the very nick of time to become colleague to Sir James Pulteney ; for indeed, my Lord, there is no other of the rank prescribed shaped for such an enterprise. A promotion to the flag, however extravagant it may appear, must be made to come at Thornborough and Saumarez, or the service before Brest will languish.

Sir John Warren has brought two nice calves and a young bull from Isle Dieu for Lady Spencer, and they will be put on board the Magnificent this day and I trust arrive safe in Cawsand Bay soon.

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George, before Brest.
14th August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—A captain commanding a squadron in this department has no authority, the captains having lived together, hail fellows well met, and there having been neither discipline nor subordination in the squadron. No service can be carried on with energy, unless there is a distinction of rank in the commanding officer. Sir Edward Pellew has been treated with the most abominable disrespect by two captains your Lordship little suspects, and if they do not make the *amende honorable* I will subject them to a court martial ; others of his squadron were offended because Sir Edward found it necessary to hold his head up—in short, my dear Lord, the adding sixteen or eighteen admirals to your list, to get at the only two men fit to command at the advanced post, which I will cover if necessary,

will meet with universal approbation, particularly from the representatives of the people, who are always ready to vote money for the Navy even when it does not deserve so well as it has done, and I am confident will continue to do, during the whole of this eventful war.

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George,
within $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile of the Black Rocks.
Wind N.E. 16th August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—You have put my mind at ease by the removal of Sir Alan Gardner, and the nomination of Sir Henry Harvey and Sir Andrew Mitchell, the most eligible persons on the list of Vice-Admirals except Sir J. Colpoys, who for obvious reasons cannot be brought forth at this time, but must command the fleet of England if we have another war while he is fit for service. I shall have great satisfaction in seeing the flag of Sir R. Calder ; but as I do not mean to kill him by the terror of rocks and sands, I shall confide the command of the advanced post to Sir James Saumarez when the Cæsar rejoins. If I was at liberty to tell your Lordship all that has happened in Quiberon Bay Sir James would not come hither again without a blue flag at the mizen topmast head.

I have the honour to be with the most perfect esteem and regard,

Your Lordship's very faithful and
obedient servant,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George, before Brest.
22nd August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I should not regard the marauding and plundering the poor inhabitants of the little islands circumjacent of the Bay of Brest, nor pilfering out of the baskets of fruit and vegetables of his brother officers, if Captain Knight would maintain the important post I have assigned him, which he abandoned last night with a leading wind for the enemy to come out of Brest, I am therefore most exceedingly impatient for the appearance of the Cæsar. The *Juste* is still afloat, the people absolute masters, and all the officers solicitous to make their retreat, so that if your Lordship does not deliver me from the captains of those ships whose seniority makes them the more inconvenient, I really do not know what I shall do.

I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's very faithful and
obedient servant,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George. 25th August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I have great deference for your judgment, but the *suaviter in modo* will not do here. I have tried it in vain. A resolution was entered into, aided and abetted by great names, that I should not be permitted to interfere with the internal economy of the Channel Fleet. The first effort was made by a captain

who must be nameless, because he has repented of his sins: the declaration he publicly made was that I might direct what I pleased, but he would adopt what he thought proper. . . . I do assure you, my Lord, that if Captain Sawyer had not been the son of a man with whom I had an acquaintance of forty-eight years, and been married to the daughter of a man I have known longer, he would not have commanded the Russell at this moment.

Your Lordship has placed me in a very arduous situation which by the conduct I have pursued will be galloping ground to whoever may be thought fitter to hold it than I am. So long as I can maintain the post to your satisfaction and to the benefit of my King and country, I will, but not a moment longer. . . .

Yours most truly,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

26th August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Without a competent degree of local knowledge in the captain who commands the advanced post, the stoutest heart will be appalled, and he must be in a ship of two decks; consequently if your Lordship perseveres in resisting a promotion, which for the welfare of my country I hope you will not do, the command of this important station must be between Sir James Saumarez and Sir Edward Pellew, when the *Impetueux* has been taken into dock. For besides the real or pretended avocations Sir John Warren has at Nottingham he has honestly declared to me that he can neither stand long

cruises nor being constantly attached to the fleet ; which, looking back to the course of his services, and manner of life when ashore, is easily accounted for.¹

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George, before Brest.
27th August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Before this reaches your hands, Captain Sawyer's disobedience and contempt of my orders will have appeared in the fullest sense, and if your Lordship does not put an extinguisher upon the gossiping correspondence carried on between your Neptunes at the Board and the officers of every description in the squadron, neither I, nor any other person who may be thought fitter for the purpose, can command it.²

Rear-Admiral Whitshed came on board the Royal George yesterday and gave me the most lamentable account of the state of the Robust imaginable. Poor Countess, who is the best creature possible in private life, is lost to the sun,

¹ In a letter to Admiral Man of 13th October, 1800, St. Vincent said of Warren : ' He is a good fellow in the presence of an enemy, but runs a little wild in other matters when detached ; he cannot bear being confined to a fleet, no more than our friend Nelson, and will be miserable when he is obliged to serve *en masse*.'

² St. Vincent wrote also to Nepean, complaining of this correspondence behind his back, and asking him to tell Spencer how impossible it was to govern a large fleet ' while the subordinate officers are encouraged by patrons at the Admiralty Board, who I can compare to nothing else but the Orators of Antient Rome who took up the cause of every discontented and factious person who presented himself at the Forum.'

moon and stars ; the first lieutenant is unequal to the situation ; and the whole government and economy of the ship, such as it is, left to the day-mate so much complained of, who appears to have uncommon merit. The Admiral assured me that the ship's side from the bow to the chesstrees were all over ——, and the inside extremely filthy, and had not Mr. David worked hard at her some time ago she would have been a pest-house. Captain Countess receives every support and encouragement from me, and to mark my attention to him he was invited to a turtle dinner yesterday, by way of dram, after the investigation, which had shook him a good deal. . . .¹

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George, near Ushant.
30th August, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I believe I may without vanity say that no man knows the calibre of our admirals and old captains better than I do ; and after the most critical examination of the List I cannot divine who are the two Rear-Admirals your Lordship feels yourself in some measure bound to give employment to. One you have lately placed in a situation where he may be, to a certain degree, useful ; but it never can be

¹ St. Vincent melted quickly under signs of improvement or repentance. Of the Captain whom he had reported for disobedience on 27th August, he writes on 12th September that he 'is ashamed of his conduct and we are better friends than ever : he acted under the influence of the pious ejaculations of Lord Bridport.'

your Lordship's intention to bring him into deeper water. On a comparative view with the Army List of General Officers we are as nearly upon a par as possible, and the picture is *pitoyable* in the extreme.

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Royal George. 6th September, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Accident, not design, placed Captain Knight at the advanced post: he was ordered into the Bay of Brest for the sole purpose of surveying, in the performance of which I believe him to be the most accurate in H.M. service—and when Rear-Admiral Berkeley was seized with *Rock* gout, I could not remove Captain Knight without disgracing him, until Sir James Saumarez arrived from Cawsand Bay, there being no other captain of old standing to whom I could have trusted that important command for a moment.

Your Lordship's very faithful
and obedient servant,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Ville de Paris. 12th September, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Permit me to recommend Captain Domett to your special favour: his conduct towards me has been everything that could be expected from an able officer and worthy man. Between Lord Bridport and Vice-Admiral Pole, equally an old woman, there was neither

discipline nor subordination in the Royal George when I went into her. She is something better now, but the men are dirty, lazy and disposed to mutiny, if they dared. I am in Paradise here (*i.e.*, in the Ville de Paris).

Yours most truly,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Ville de Paris. 14th September, 1800.

My dear Lord,—In return for the confidence your Lordship has had the goodness to repose in me, I give you my opinion freely upon the powers of the three persons to be included in the next promotion. *Graves* and *Trollope* have the single qualifications of courage to claim on: in every other part of their character they are totally deficient, neither of them having the capacity to move the ship under their command, in the order of sailing or line of bearing. *Campbell*, though he was under my command in the Mediterranean, having always been detached I have no knowledge of his abilities. In all other respects he is perfectly gentlemanlike in his manners and choice in his friendships.

The ships which have been commanded by my élève *George Berkeley*, or where his flag had flown, have done him no credit. The Formidable, for instance, which ship Captain Thornborough has had the merit of making the crack ship of the fleet. But in a distant conversation I have held with him he showed no disposition to begin another such Herculean labour, and I believe wishes to continue captain of her.

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Ville de Paris, Ushant, bearing S. by E.,
12 leagues. Squally weather. Wind N.W.
23rd September, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Sir James Saumarez does not stand the work at the advanced posts with the firmness I expected, whence it is evident that the man who faces a Frenchman or Spaniard with intrepidity, does not always encounter rocks and shoals with the same feeling. Would to God the promotion had taken place that I might get at Captain Thornborough! This not being the case, Sir Edward Pellew is my sheet anchor. I therefore request that orders may be lodged at Plymouth for the *Impetueux* to proceed into port without anchoring in Cawsand Bay, if the wind will permit, and the utmost dispatch used in docking her. I have no answer from the Board about the guard-room at Brixham watering place, without which neither the officers nor marines on duty there can perform what is expected from them.

I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's very faithful

and obedient servant,

ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Ville de Paris, mid-Channel,
25th September, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I see by the papers Sir Hyde Parker is arrived, and as he has had no work whatever, or responsibility to affect his mind or body, during the whole of his command, he is very well able to come out in the *Royal George*

ST. VINCENT AND HIS OFFICERS 19

and give me a spell, if he does not object to serve in the second post, upon the subject of which there are various opinions. Captain Domett will conduct the squadron under his direction with great ability, and the San Josef, should he fancy her will be preparing under the care and inspection of my friend Leeke, and with the crew of the Namur will be the quietest and very best manned ship in his Majesty's Navy.

I am now entering into the fifth month from Torbay and though I stand my ground better than most men it is right your Lordship should know that I am very much affected by damp weather, and I dread the approach of cold. I have not communicated these feelings to any man except Nepean, but I should be culpable to conceal them from you. . . .

ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Ville de Paris, in Torbay.

29th October, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Besides the advantage of obtaining the services of three efficient Admirals, Troubridge, Saumarez and Pellew, the only men to be relied on unemployed from Sir Peter Parker down to the last-named of the three—for Admiral Cornwallis, Sir J. Colpoys, and Vice-Admiral Montagu seem out of the question at present—the rust and vermin you would get rid of by this much wanted promotion, is a matter of more serious moment than you are aware of. Sir James Saumarez will never complain, but I am told by those who have lately seen him, that he is as thin as a shotten herring. Sir Edward Pellew cannot be ready to relieve him in less

time than a month, and I have known a ship detained in Hamoaze three months waiting for a wind to get into the Sound.

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Tor Abbey. 2nd November, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Neuilly, who from a fisherman became at one jump Captain of the *Sans Pareil*, and now prefect of L'Orient, commands the flotilla at Dunkirk, which by assembling the *schuyts* of Holland, and the *billanders* of Flanders, may be soon made to contain thirty or forty thousand men, and while making demonstration against Guernsey and Jersey probably has for its real object a descent at Black Water, a little below Maldon, and not more than forty-five miles from London. I have very great jealousy of that quarter, and when I consider the feebleness of your flag officers on those coasts, and the incapacity of your commanders of Fencibles, who with the exception of Captain Edward O'Brien, and he said to be in deranged health, and abominably chosen, I tremble for the event. Sir Edward Pellew, Sir Thomas Troubridge, the Captains Hood and Hallowell, are the only characters I could place entire reliance upon in such a case; Troubridge I can ill spare, but when the country is in danger, no one must crave for himself.

Most faithfully yours,
ST. VINCENT.

Your Lordship is aware that the Dutch and Flemish fishermen are better acquainted with our sands than we are.

ST. VT.

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ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Tor Abbey. 30th November, 1800.

My dear Lord,— . . . The Princess Royal will do admirably for Sir Erasmus Gower. I always had the San Josef in view for my friend Nelson, who seems most highly flattered by it : all the fear I have about him is, that he will tire of being attached to a great fleet, and want to be carrying on a predatory war (which is his *métier*) on a coast that he is entirely ignorant of, having never served in those seas. Captain Ball is peculiarly qualified for Gibraltar (exclusive of his eminent services at Malta), he possesses much temper, which is extremely necessary in all transactions with our friend O'Hara, and is a thinking judicious man, without pomp or display and in my judgment your Lordship has made the best possible choice in him. . . .

I heartily hope your Lordship is perfectly recovered from your indisposition, and I have the honour to be

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

3rd December, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I do not for obvious reasons submit the enclosed letter to the Board, but I beg permission to offer an opinion founded upon long experience—that the measure of appointing first lieutenants unknown to the captains of his Majesty's ships, and for the most men of no established reputation, is at all times fraught with mischievous consequences, more particularly so in these days of insubordination and licentiousness.

Most faithfully yours,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT AND CAPTAIN FOLEY

Collingwood having inspected the Elephant, Captain Foley wrote to St. Vincent, to call his attention, in case Collingwood should not have done so, to the excessive weakness of his ship's company: saying that the Admiral had remarked that 'he never saw fewer seamen among the seamen or poorer landsmen among the landsmen.' St. Vincent immediately forwarded Foley's letter to the Admiralty, remarking that it was his indispensable duty to do so, although he had not yet received Collingwood's report. The Admiralty replied that Foley had 'misrepresented in every respect the Rear-Admiral's opinion of the state of the Elephant's ship's company,' and ordered St. Vincent to direct Foley to be more correct in any representations he might make in the future.

Foley was deeply hurt at this reproof, and protested. St. Vincent supported him in his protest. To Spencer he wrote:

'Captain Foley, than whom a more honourable man and zealous officer does not exist, is so much wounded by the rebuke I was directed to convey to him that I have been under the greatest apprehension lest he should resign his commission: but he being a thinking and sensible man, I have hitherto succeeded in delaying his carrying this measure into execution.' To Nepean, at the same time, he said: 'If Vice-Admiral Young is permitted to mix so much gall in your ink, every officer of spirit and distinction will be driven out of the service. I have written fully to Lord Spencer upon the subject of Captain Foley, who I have great difficulty in retaining; and if the monstrous letter which was written to me, in consequence of his just representation,

is not done away with, you will soon have a captain to name for the Elephant: and the next impertinence I receive will make room for Sir Hyde Parker.'

Lord Spencer having written in support of the Board's action, St. Vincent replied on the 24th December:

My Lord,—I agree with your Lordship entirely as to the propriety of the Board remarking upon Captain Foley's statement, and the formal report made by Rear-Admiral Collingwood: but I never can be brought to think that the difference was of such a nature as to justify the tone of the letter in question. The honour of an officer may be compared to the chastity of a woman, and when once wounded can never be recovered. I am in hopes a second report from the Rear-Admiral will furnish a proper occasion to do away with the sting of this unfortunate letter: in the meantime I am about to send the Excellent and Elephant to relieve the Captain and Canada, which will delay proceedings on the part of Captain Foley who, I am sorry to inform your Lordship, has taken a decided resolution which I have not been able to shake.

Yours most faithfully,

ST. VINCENT.

This letter drew from Lord Spencer the following letter to Foley:

27th December, 1800.

Dear Sir,—I was much concerned to find that you have seen reason to feel so much hurt at some expressions used in a letter to Lord St. Vincent from Mr. Nepean, on the subject of the survey of your ship's company by Admiral Collingwood. Nothing can be further from my intentions, or that of any member of the Board

of Admiralty, than to express any other opinion of your character and conduct as an officer than that of the sincerest regard and esteem, and I am convinced that the difference which struck us in the two accounts must have arisen from your having misapprehended something in the Rear-Admiral's conversation on the occasion; the difference was, however, such as could not but be noticed, as it appeared in the official paper, and the whole operation of supplying men for the fleet in the present extended state is attended with so much difficulty, and requires so much economy in the distribution, that the Board is under the necessity of enforcing the strictest accuracy in the report to which they are obliged to trust on this subject, in order to enable them to provide for the indispensable demand of the service. At the same time you may rest assured that we do you full credit for your anxiety, very natural to every zealous officer, to have your ship as well manned as possible, and I trust that with this explanation you will no longer remain under the impression which you appeared to have received from the terms of the letter above mentioned.

I am, dear Sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,
SPENCER.

This courteous letter was followed by a complete explanation from Collingwood, in his second report, in which he said: 'I have thought it proper to state these circumstances in order, as far as they will, to remove any impression which his [Foley's] different account may have made on your Lordship, unfavourable to the correctness of Captain Foley.'

PART II

THE MEDITERRANEAN

DURING THE FRENCH OCCUPATION OF EGYPT

AUGUST 1798 TO MARCH 1801

- SECTION I. ST. VINCENT—GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, JANUARY TO JULY 1799
- SECTION II. SIDNEY SMITH, OCTOBER 1798 TO DECEMBER 1800
- SECTION III. LORD KEITH, DECEMBER 1799 TO MARCH 1801

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN DURING THE FRENCH OCCUPATION OF EGYPT

AFTER the battle of the Nile, the squadron in the Mediterranean was dispersed. Nelson detached Saumarez with seven ships to escort the prizes to Gibraltar, left Hood with three ships of the line and three frigates to blockade Alexandria, and sailed with the remainder of the squadron to Naples. The French at once took steps to put what remained of their fighting ships at Alexandria—some frigates and small craft—into order, as well as three Venetian ships of the line and three frigates which were also at that port. Bonaparte's intention was to organise a squadron at Corfu composed of these units and the survivors of the Nile—two of the line and two frigates—and with this force to reopen communications and protect the supplies of the army in Egypt. At the same time a flotilla, under the command of Rear-Admiral Perrée, was organised on the 16th August to go up the Nile with the army and take possession of the Fayum.

The British superiority at sea prevented the realisation of the Corfu plan. Until other help from France should be forthcoming the army had to resign itself to living on the resources of the country. The coast, therefore, was to be fortified, garrisons established at all points, and every possible means taken to keep open the water communications between Rosetta and Alexandria for the passage of heavy munitions.

It was in such circumstances that Sir Sidney Smith was appointed to a command in the Levant. Born on 21st

June, 1764, a captain at the age of 18½, he had fifteen years of service in that rank when he received his orders, three days after his thirty-first birthday, to proceed in command by the *Tigre* to the Mediterranean; and independently of the Admiralty, an appointment from Lord Grenville as joint plenipotentiary with his brother, Spencer Smith, at Constantinople. Even in the hands of a man of sober and restrained judgment, and of equable character, an appointment of this nature, made in this manner, was fraught with possibilities of misunderstanding both on the part of himself and of those naval authorities under whom he would serve in his capacity as an officer of a detached squadron. But in the hands of Smith these dangers were increased. Possessing in the highest degree the essential military qualities of courage and resourcefulness and imagination, he combined with them presumption, vanity and exaggerated self will. His defence of Acre consolidated him in the character of a Hero, a character he had earned earlier by distinguished bravery. 'Beware of Heroes,' said old Sir Roger Curtis to Croker, 'the more you come to know them the less you will think of them.' So it seems to have been with Smith; and while he possessed the power, to which St. Vincent attributed such importance, of taking responsibility, he carried it to the excess of totally disregarding all instructions except such as were dictated by his own ideas.

This combination of qualities led him first into antagonising the senior officers—St. Vincent, Nelson, Troubridge—under or with whom he had to act in the Mediterranean, and then into overriding the policy of the Government, because in his opinion, his own estimation of the military situation was more correct than theirs. Whether Smith's view that the Convention of El Arish would have proved advantageous in the long run, be it justified or not by later events, was correct, does not affect the question of the rightness or wrongness of his conduct in disregarding the terms of the Treaty with Turkey of 5th January, 1799, the expressed and categorical orders to him from Nelson—'I must therefore *strictly*

charge and command you never to give any French ship or man leave to quit Egypt'—and the orders of his commander-in-chief, Lord Keith, of 8th January, 1800, not to consent to any capitulation of the French except as prisoners of war, surrendering their army and all stores and ships in Alexandria.

The correspondence is too voluminous and detailed for reproduction in anything approaching its entirety. Selection has been made from those letters relating to the trouble created by Smith's manners on his arrival and the Convention of El Arish. For the convenience of the reader a few letters in the Spencer collection have been included, which already occur in the *Life and Correspondence of Smith* by Barrow, his most able and authoritative advocate.

While Smith was serving in the Levant, three officers commanded in the Mediterranean—St. Vincent from January to July 1799; Keith from July till his departure from the station in chase of Bruix; and Nelson from August to November, when Keith returned and remained in command throughout the remainder of Lord Spencer's tenure of office. The letters from St. Vincent during the first of these periods, though numerous, deal mainly with administrative matters, but apart from the situation created by Bruix's raid, a few treat of the general matters of the Mediterranean. Dundas explains to General Stuart the undigested ideas that fill his restless mind; Acton, at the instance of his master, pesters St. Vincent to place in the forefront of his objects the defence of the Neapolitan kingdom; and St. Vincent's letters emphasise the eternal lesson that the command of the sea is not merely a matter of a few very powerful battle-ships, but one demanding the services of numerous vessels of all the smaller classes.

St. Vincent officially transferred the command to Keith on 16th June. The letters concerning Nelson's disobedience of Keith's orders have been included in the section dealing with Bruix's cruise. After Keith arrived at Spithead Nelson became senior officer in the Mediterranean. No appointment as commander-

in-chief was issued to him, but he received the following instructions, dated 20th August, 1799 :

Your Lordship is on all occasions to cultivate to the utmost of your power the most perfect harmony and good understanding with all his Majesty's allies, co-operating cordially with, and assisting as far as circumstances will admit, their fleets and armies, and protecting their subjects : for which purposes you are till the French shall be entirely driven out of Italy, to keep such a part of your squadron as may be found necessary on the coast of Genoa to prevent them from receiving supplies or to distress them in any other way that may be found practicable.

Your Lordship is also to take such measures as shall appear most effectual for the speedy reduction of the town of Malta.

Your Lordship is to be particularly attentive to the protection of the island of Minorca where you are to station such a force as from the information you may receive of the intentions of the Spaniards to attack, and the preparations they make for that purpose, you shall judge to be necessary.

Your Lordship is to watch the motions of the ships remaining in the port of Cadiz, stationing off that port a sufficient force to blockade it, not only to prevent their ships-of-war from putting to sea and their merchant ships from entering, but also to ensure the safety of the convoys passing to and from the Mediterranean.

Your Lordship is to be attentive to the trade of H.M. subjects and that of his Allies, giving it every protection in your power and appointing convoys from one port to another whenever other more essential services will admit of it.

As from the great exertions of the ships under the orders of Sir Sidney Smith the French have been driven out of Syria, and as they will probably be very soon driven out of or entirely destroyed in Egypt, it is their Lordships' commands that you do whenever you shall be informed of this, and that the services of Sir Sidney are no longer required on that coast, call the ships away and employ them on other service.

Having stated to your Lordship the different services to which it is necessary to direct your attention, I have only to add that their Lordships have the greatest confidence in your zeal and exertions to perform them as far as the force under your orders will admit.

I have the honour [&c.],
E. NEPEAN.

Rear-Admiral Nelson, K.B.

Keith returned to the Mediterranean and resumed command in November 1799. There was now no French naval force of any importance—apart from small craft

and privateers—in the Mediterranean. The siege of Malta was in progress, blockaded at sea by Troubridge, with British troops ashore under Graham ; but for want of sufficient troops its fall was not brought about, and all the hopes of speedy reduction from famine were to be disappointed. In Italy the Austrians were making a successful attack, and calling loudly for British co-operation at sea, the Russian squadron employed there having proved wholly useless. Sidney Smith was in the Levant, indifferently assisted by a Russian and a Turkish squadron. Nelson was at Palermo watching over the Sicilian interests. Since there was no enemy fleet to engage the attention of Keith, nor a sufficient British army, or ‘disposable force,’ to take advantage of the situation created by British predominance at sea, there existed what amounted to a deadlock. ‘All our Mediterranean operations are pretty nearly at a standstill,’ wrote Nelson.

The operations of blockade at sea, easy as they appear to those unacquainted with their conduct, are notoriously exhausting, and, as sea-commanders have often pointed out, uncertain. To prevent the escape or arrival of a single ship, or a few ships, within a given area or port can never be absolutely promised. The arrival of even one supply ship in a blockaded place may undo the work of months and prolong the operation for many more. Keith was anxious to bring this situation to an end, and pressed for troops to capture Malta and expel the French from Egypt ; but troops were not available. The Helder had used up the army, and months were needed before it could again be rendered effective. Russian and bad Neapolitan troops were got together for Malta where their presence did little beyond contributing towards the creation of a political problem of grave acuteness. Smith’s Convention of El Arish, concluded on 24th January, 1800, offered a solution for getting the French out of Egypt, but one so contrary to what Keith knew to be the Government’s intentions that he was at a loss as to how to act. Within two days of the receipt of the Convention in London instructions were

sent him, by the terms of which, while not disavowing the Convention, he was in no way to render its execution easy.¹ These instructions were as follows :

INSTRUCTIONS TO LORD KEITH

The Rt. Honble. Lord Grenville, one of the principal Secretaries of State, having in his letter of this day's date acquainted us that in consequence of the information contained in the dispatches lately received from your Lordship, the Earl of Elgin and Sir Sidney Smith relative to the capitulation of the French army in Egypt, his Majesty had been pleased to signify his commands that instructions should be transmitted to your Lordship expressing his Majesty's disapprobation of the terms entered into by the said capitulation, those terms appearing to his Majesty to be more advantageous to the enemy than their situation entitled them to expect, and being likely to prejudice the interest of the Allies by restoring to the French Government the soldiers of a considerable and disciplined body of troops. That besides this objection to the terms, his Majesty does not consider Captain Sir Sidney Smith as having been authorised either to enter into, or to sanction any such agreement in his Majesty's name, that officer having had no special authority for that purpose, and the case not being one in which the Captain commanding H.M. ships on the coast of Egypt ought to have taken upon himself to enter into an agreement without the sanction of his commanding officer. But as the General commanding the enemy's troops appears to have treated him as a person whom he *bona fide* conceived to possess such authority, and as part of the treaty was immediately to be executed by the enemy, so that by annulling this transaction (as far as his Majesty's officer was a party thereto) the enemy could not be replaced in the same situation in which he before stood, his Majesty from a scrupulous regard to the public faith has judged it proper that this officer should abstain from any act inconsistent with the engagements to which Captain Sir Sidney Smith has erroneously given the sanction of his Majesty's name. And whereas Lord Grenville has at the same time acquainted us that with this view he shall transmit to the Earl of Elgin his Majesty's commands to settle with the Porte the form of a Passeport to be given in the name of his Majesty, not as a party to the capitulation but as an ally of the Porte ; and that it is his Majesty's further pleasure the said Passeports, as well as those which may in the interval (however informally) be granted by Sir Sidney Smith, are to be

¹ Captain Maitland and Major Douglas arrived at the Admiralty on the 26th with Keith's dispatches, among them those relating to the Convention of El Arish. The consequent instructions were dated the 28th.

respected by his Majesty's officers. But that although from the considerations above mentioned his Majesty does not think proper to obstruct the execution of this treaty by the Porte in the manner therein stipulated, he does not feel himself bound to authorise his officers to take any active part in it or to furnish any convoy or transports for its execution, or to take any other share in carrying it into effect; yet if any application should be made to your Lordship for liberty to send Cartel ships from France to Egypt for the transfer of the army under the capitulation, your Lordship is to grant such Passeports accordingly, under such restrictions and precautions as you may judge necessary, according to circumstances, to prevent this liberty being abused to any other purpose; we do in pursuance of his Majesty's commands as above signified hereby require and direct your Lordship to govern yourself accordingly, and to give the necessary orders in consequence to the commanders of H.M. ships and vessels under your command, taking care at the same time to apprise Captain Sir Sidney Smith of H.M.'s pleasure on the subject of his proceedings herein; and in case your Lordship should see any ground to apprehend any intention on the part of the Turks or of the Russians to prevent the execution of the capitulations or to commit any act of hostility against the French army either before or after its embarkation, we do further direct your Lordship in such case to use your utmost endeavour to persuade them to all such measures as may be most consistent with the faithful observance of the engagement contracted with the enemy.

Given [&c.], 28th March, 1800.

SPENCER.

J. GAMBIER.

WM. YOUNG.

To Vice-Admiral Lord Keith, K.B.

At the same time information was received, in a letter from Lord Elgin to Nelson of 20th January, 1800, that the Turkish Government contemplated violating the Convention. Elgin reported that the Turks, taking their cue from Bonaparte's 'shameless falsehood' that France had not made war on the Porte, claimed that the French army had given them a right to treat the troops not as open and public enemies but as unauthorised robbers and brigands. Even if this principle were admitted, which it was not, it would not follow, the Admiralty told Keith, that it would be justifiable to treat and make an agreement even with brigands and then violate it. Keith was ordered to be on his guard

'against taking inadvertently any step which might even indirectly afford facility to the Turks for the execution of such perfidious and detestable cruelty,' and to be prepared to make every effort of persuasion and the firmest representations against a measure which must fix an indelible stain on all who were concerned in it, or parties to it.

While these barbaric allies had to be kept in hand and prevented from committing vile atrocities, other allies, pursuing their own interests, were hardly less difficult to control. Russia was showing signs of wishing to take Corsica, and Keith asked what attitude he should take if the intention developed into fact. He was told that he was not to take any steps, directly or indirectly, to counteract such designs, but 'to consider the proceedings of the Russians in that respect as measures of hostility carried on by one of his Majesty's Allies against the territories of the common enemy.' But if he were requested to furnish any assistance, he was to decline with all due civility, for the reason of insufficiency of the force to attend to that object without detriment to the due performance of the services in which he was directed to act.¹

While this correspondence was passing Keith made Leghorn his headquarters, whence he superintended the blockade of Genoa. Genoa fell on 5th June; but the satisfaction to which this deferred success gave rise was short lived. A week later the Austrian army was destroyed at Marengo, a devastating blow which left little scope in Italy for the British army which Abercromby had arrived at Mahon on 22nd June to command. His force, therefore, was carried to Minorca, where orders came for the descent on Cadiz to which reference is made elsewhere. The proposal to send an expedition to Egypt followed, about which there is little correspondence except that relating to the supposed differences between Keith and Abercromby.

¹ Secret Order, 29th March, 1800.

SECTION I

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, JANUARY TO
JULY 1799

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Rosia House, Gibraltar.
1st January, 1799.

My Lord,—To judge by the movements at Cadiz, and along the coast, from thence to the Bay of Rosas, and the intelligence General Stuart has sent me from Minorca, the French are urging Spain to attempt regaining that island. I therefore hope Mr. Dundas has attended to my letter of the 12th November, a duplicate and triplicate of which was also sent, and that I may soon receive directions to embark three regiments from hence, and others arrive to replace them. I have already sent two thousand barrels of gunpowder and one thousand stand of arms, with the four block-houses lately sent from England; and we are busily employed in embarking seventeen four-and-twenty pounder guns, a considerable quantity of timber, pallisadoes, shot, cartridges, &c. And as I observed to your Lordship in a former letter, every nerve shall be stretched to maintain the island, which really is of infinitely greater importance than at any period of our naval history, for we cannot expect anything from the auxiliary naval force without it.

I am anxious to learn that the Austrian armies have begun their operations, otherwise

his Majesty of the two Sicilies will be in a very critical and dangerous situation.

I have the honour to be, with great regard and esteem,

Your Lordship's very faithful
and obedient servant,
ST. VINCENT.

DUNDAS TO SPENCER

Downing Street.
Tuesday, 1st January, 1799.

My dear Lord,—You will think it unreasonable that I should put into your hands and call upon you to read the very rough and almost illegible draft of a letter I am about to send to General Stuart, but it is necessary that you should be in the knowledge of all the ideas I at present entertain respecting the Mediterranean, in every part of which your co-operation is necessary, and perhaps the perusal of what I have wrote is as easy a way as any to put in hand the ideas we have talked over together. If you have any suggestions, additions, or corrections, be so good as send them to me. Upon your returning I must put it into Huskisson's hand to be wrote over in a form fit to be dispatched.

Yours sincerely,
HENRY DUNDAS.

DUNDAS TO STUART

Downing Street. 5th January, 1799.

My dear Sir,—With your public dispatches of the 18th of November, which reached me on the 23rd of last month, I received your private

letter of the same date. Major Gifford is now on the point of proceeding to rejoin you at Minorca with my official answer to the former, and I cannot allow him to depart without expressing to you the real satisfaction I derived from the receipt of your dispatches. The acquisition of so important a possession,¹ guarded by a superior force, could not have been accomplished without great exertion and a very masterly conduct on the part of the commanders. I would not, as any addition to your situation, at any other time have suggested to his Majesty the propriety of investing you with the Order of the Bath, as mentioned in my public letter, but I wish to see that Order restored to its proper destination, and therefore had no doubt of your feeling that, when unasked for, it was sent by your Sovereign as a public mark of his approbation, you would wear it with the satisfaction which attaches to it when bestowed upon such motives. The situation of Governor of Minorca so naturally belongs to the conqueror of it (if you choose to remain there) that the Duke of York has probably before this time taken his Majesty's pleasure on the subject, and will of course convey it to you.

This leads me more minutely to convey to you confidentially the different ideas which occur to me at the present moment in consequence of the conquest of Minorca. It would appear that of late the Court of Spain has become under the control of France more decided in their hostile intentions towards Portugal; and, on the other hand, if Portugal can in any material degree be supported, they seem more decided than formerly in their resolution to risk everything rather than

¹ Referring to the capture of Minorca.

submit to so unprovoked an aggression. Among other symptoms they have lately, through their Minister here, intimated to Lord Grenville a desire to have their army commanded by a German or British General. As to the last, Lord Grenville has without hesitation, and on the first mention of it, stated that unless the influence of the Duc de la Foens was totally superseded, it was impossible to ask any British officer of character to risk his reputation on such a service. There has not yet been time to learn the result of this communication, but if the Portuguese should really come forward with the decision and firmness they have announced, we shall wish to give them every encouragement to pursue it; and if a British officer is to have the effective and real command of their army, you are naturally the person his Majesty would wish to see placed in that situation.

I need not detail to you, who know well the weakness we labour under from the want of an efficient offensive army, how little in that way we can add to the strength of Portugal; but under such circumstances as I have supposed, I think by the beginning of spring we might add another British regiment of infantry to the two there already, and could be sending two additional regiments of cavalry, which would certainly add much to the strength of any army. Some of the regiments of fencible cavalry which are now in very high order are desirous of being sent on foreign service; and if I saw any tempting circumstances from the conduct of Portugal to induce this country to make such an exertion, I should not despair of being able to bring forward three of those regiments on such a service. What is already there would, with such additions,

certainly form a very respectable British force to act in support of the exertions of the Portuguese Army; at the same time it would be extremely desirable if some well disciplined European force could be got somewhere on the Continent to add to the general strength; but any ideas I entertain on that subject are so vague that I do not think it necessary to dwell upon them.

But there is another light in which I wish to bring the defence of Portugal under your view. The acquisition of Minorca seems to hold out a natural resource for such an object. Its own defence and security must certainly form the first consideration, and I should hope the force you carried there (which happily is unbroken) and the regiment of Roll from Portugal, joined to the regiment formed by yourself on the island, and reinforced by the 30th and 89th Regiments ordered from Ireland to Minorca, would put you at ease on that score, especially considering the powerful protection derived from the navy, which I have learned from Lord Spencer will not be withdrawn. I wish however to direct your consideration to an ulterior view of the subject. From what you know, and I have already stated, you must be aware that any addition I could make to the strength of the forces under your command would be small; but it has occurred to me that even a very limited addition would enable you, in concert with the exertions of an active naval force, so to overawe and alarm the coasts of Spain, as to oblige them to keep a very large part of their army to protect their own coasts from the attacks or diversions, of which, by menaces and management, you might create the constant apprehension. It would be of

infinite importance if we could by any means collect such a force on the Island of Minorca as to strike some real effective blow on Cartagena, or any other essential port or possession of the enemy in the Mediterranean, and no exertion shall be omitted that has a tendency to accomplish so beneficial an object. But short of that, and with a more limited force, it does occur to me that material benefits would arise, and particularly so to the security of Portugal, if by active and judicious demonstrations the coast of Spain could be kept in so continued an alarm as to oblige them to look to their own security in place of disturbing unjustly, and without provocation, the ancient ally of this country, and which, if Spain was not under the thralldom of France, ought by every tie or moral rectitude or political expediency to enjoy likewise the alliance of Spain.

It will immediately occur to you that all the ideas I have latterly suggested must be for the joint consideration of you and the Commander of his Majesty's naval force in the Mediterranean. Lord Spencer and I have had repeated communications on the subject, and he has wrote and will write again to Lord St. Vincent, whose abilities and ardour of mind will go hand in hand with your dispositions in every plan of spirit and enterprise by which the honour or interests of the kingdom can be promoted.

I trust I have said enough to convey to you the objects I have in view, and wish you to consider I have likewise conversed fully with Major Gifford, whom you recommended to my particular confidence, so that I flatter myself he will be enabled to give you any further explanations you may require. The particulars I have stated will

likewise enable you to point out to me what your wishes are as to the disposal of your own further services, and likewise as to the inclination you have expressed respecting a short visit to England. I flatter myself any inconveniences your health had suffered may have been removed or alleviated by the relief which your mind would receive from the successful termination of the exertions and fatigue which the nature of your services required.

In your answer to this letter I of course expect to receive from you, after communication with the Naval Commander, a detailed report how far all or any of the ideas I have suggested can be practically realised. In doing so you will naturally point out to me the objects which suggest themselves to your view, and the extent of the means which appear requisite for the execution of them, whether upon a larger or a smaller scale. It is only by a detailed view of the subject that I can be enabled to decide what advice I can give to his Majesty, and what exertions I ought to make in the particular department which his Majesty has confided to me.

I shall expect your answer with impatience, and in the meantime shall make every exertion for preparing whatever may occur to me as likely to result from the joint suggestion of Lord St. Vincent and you.

I have the honour to be [&c., &c.],
HENRY DUNDAS.

GENERAL ACTON TO ST. VINCENT

Palermo. 18th January, 1799.

My Lord,—In the strange and critical situation of their Sicilian Majesties in this moment, I take the liberty to present myself to your Lordship,

and beg another mark of your assistance, of which their Majesties have already many efficacious proofs in the defence of their kingdom. This new service, for which I implore your Lordship's help, is of forwarding to the Court of London the dispatches of their Majesties, directed to the Sicilian Minister, Marquis de Circello, which I have begged the brave and excellent Lord Nelson to receive, and send to your Lordship. His Sicilian Majesty since twenty-four days of exertions in this kingdom, for the energetical defence of it, has the mortification to find that the corruption discovered in his Neapolitan Army has spread its pernicious influence even on the persons to which he had confided the government of that kingdom in his absence. Those chiefs have been reduced to make and settle a Convention or Truce for two months, and have given four provinces in hostage to the French with contributions. This Convention has been broken directly by his Majesty, his Vicar-General dismissed, and another Military Government established for the defence of the eight provinces remaining, and the recovering the others traitorously given to the enemy. As the French may boast of their success, by the corruption only bought and acquired in order to avoid the contrary and unfavourable opinion, which the enemy would by their spreading this Convention, though disapproved by the King, induce the Court to form against his Majesty's principles, and steady attachment to the good and common cause, with his allies, we think that the couriers sent by land from this distant island shall not reach in time to prevent the bad effects of the perfidious French policy. The friendly condescension of Lord Nelson to whom his Majesty,

already under so many essential obligations, offers a British vessel, by which we implore your Lordship's assistance as well in sending this Court's letters to England, as to procure us what you will think proper for our defence. Without the British help this Monarchy is undone. We retrench ourselves in Sicily and Calabria, no attack can be made but by sea ; we concert, and shall concert, every means with Lord Nelson, and your Lordship will, we hope, procure to their Sicilian Majesties, at the Court of St. James's, which they implore by this occasion, the efficacious defences and assistance of which they are in want by sea. I present my best wishes and respects with which I am for ever,

Your Lordship's most obliged
and most humble servant,
JOHN ACTON.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Rosia House, Gibraltar.
13th February, 1799.

My Lord,—Your Lordship will learn from the communications made by General Acton to Lord Nelson and by his Excellency's letter to me, copies of which are enclosed, that their Sicilian Majesties and their Minister expect further naval support from hence, which is morally impossible to furnish ; for the blockade of Alexandria, and Malta, with the protection of the islands of Sicily and Minorca, have swallowed up near half the force under my command, and I will venture to assert, that no officer in his Majesty's service but myself would have hazarded what I have done. Lord Keith has

seventeen ships of the line, and three sloops, under his command, some of the former in so crazy a state, they are obliged to come occasionally into the Mole to be patched up: the Princess Royal, for instance, just gone out, and the Prince George now lightening to come at her leaks, which are several strakes under water. We have also had to shift the main masts of the Edgar, Powerful and Marlborough, and are driven to our last shift for resources; in truth the mast last mentioned, could not have been prepared, without extracting the iron from the stumps of those disabled in the action of the Nile, and we are without sails, canvas, cordage, oak, elm, or fir plank; and what is still more alarming our provisions run very short. Unfortunately Lord Keith has been forced by blowing weather to take shelter in Tetuan Bay and only one ship (the Hector) off Cadiz for the protection of the few remaining victuallers expected from Lisbon. The want of frigates to communicate with Lord Nelson and Commodore Duckworth is very distressing, and I cannot call the Flora and Caroline from the north-west coast of Spain, as they, with the Speedy and Mondovi sloops, compose all the force I can give for the protection of the outward and homeward bound Portugal trade, which has suffered much from the depredations of small French privateers, and a great deal of clamour ensued. Ten additional efficient frigates and sloops are absolutely necessary for carrying on the extensive services of this command, and there really should be something like a relief to the ships which form the blockade of Cadiz, some of them having been ten and eleven months out of port, and the health of their crews put to great risk, although it has hitherto been

miraculously preserved. In this statement, however incredible it may appear, I do assure your Lordship I have nothing exaggerated, yet I am much more affected by the discontents of Lord Nelson and Captain Troubridge: the former continuing seemingly determined upon relinquishing his command and returning to England, and the latter in such a state of despondency from the slight he has received, which he terms an indelible disgrace, that I really am put to my wits' end how to act. The arrival of the *San Leon* (with a commission for his first lieutenant to commander) may operate to pacify him, although he left Palermo in a mood that has given me inexpressible pain.

I have the honour to be with great esteem and regard,

Your Lordship's very faithful
and obedient servant,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

6th March, 1799.

My Lord,—The instant General Stuart was informed of the deplorable state Sicily was in he determined to embark with the 30th and 89th Regiments and endeavour to preserve the Castle of Messina, and he sailed from Port Mahon on the 2nd instant; his determination was to post for Palermo immediately in the *Aurora*, and to be followed by the three ships-of-war armed in flute with the troops; the whole got out of the harbour at the same time, and although the wind was against them cannot be long in reaching their destination. Should Sicily be lost the

French will find no difficulty in throwing supplies into Malta by means of boats.

Lord Nelson writes that some provisions have got in, although every exertion has been made by Captain Ball, and the squadron under his orders.

The delay of the convoy with our provisions and stores is a very lamentable thing. Commodore Duckworth writes me that he has only three months' victuals and I have none to send him. I hope soon to be relieved from the anxiety which preys upon me more than I can express.

I have the honour to be with the truest regard and esteem,

Your Lordship's very faithful
and obedient servant,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

7th March, 1799.

My Lord,—The just apprehension I was under last evening of the easterly wind being in the wane, prevented my sending the copy of Lord Nelson's last letter, and an extract from one I received from Commodore Duckworth by the William Pitt cutter, and it was very fortunate I did not detain her, the wind having this morning come to the westward. Your Lordship will perceive that Lord Nelson thinks the Island of Sicily on the eve of a revolution, and Commodore Duckworth is evidently disappointed that he did not receive some mark of royal favour and approbation of his services, when General Stuart was created a Knight of the Bath, and will I am sure represent me as lukewarm to the profession, if I do not at least state his expectations, which,

I understand from Captain Digby, are to be created a baronet. It is certainly very unusual for a person detached, as he was, under a plan and instructions from his Commander-in-Chief, from which the circumstances attending the enterprise did not require the smallest deviation, to be distinguished in the manner he looks for. Very different was the case of General Stuart who received his instructions from the Secretary of State for the War Department, and was himself a Commander-in-Chief. I conclude the Commodore must take his direction from Lord Nelson, although the cases differ in an essential degree, the latter being left entirely to his own judgment; for as I neither knew the destination of Buonaparte, nor the probable position the French squadron was likely to be attacked in, I could give no other orders than general ones, positively directing the Rear-Admiral to bring the enemy to a decisive action, wherever he met him. Having said this, I certainly shall be very glad to see the ambition of the Commodore gratified, for he is above the ordinary class of sea officers, has acquitted himself entirely to my approbation in everything except the appointment of a commissioner, in which his vanity got the better of his discretion, and has upon former occasions attracted the attention of the Admiralty Board. I therefore leave his pretensions with your Lordship whose superior judgment and experience in these matters will determine what is right to be done upon the occasion.

I have the honour to be with great regard and esteem,

Your Lordship's very faithful

and obedient servant,

ST. VINCENT.

*Extract of a Letter from Commodore Duckworth
to the Earl of St. Vincent, dated 27th February,
1799.*

(Enclosed in Lord St. Vincent's, 7th March, 1799.)

I derive real pleasure in finding his Majesty has conferred the Red Ribbon on the General, as I think him justly entitled to it, and his claims have certainly acquired weight, by the almost unparalleled exertions used in raising out of the ruins of St. Phillip's Castle a work that will give confidence to his troops, and powerfully resist a superior enemy, if drove to that extremity. Having done this justice to the General's services, I hope your Lordship will use your influence to prevent the Navy from being in the background, as they certainly bore an equal share, and from their exertions and enterprise the first day the Spaniards say a panic was produced, which gave our army an unmolested pass through the island, &c., and certainly being unnoticed is a tacit censure on my part of the service: and I must own to such a friend as your Lordship, that I have an honest pride, when conscious of rectitude, that will ever make me anxiously solicitous, in my professional pursuits, to be distinguished by my King and country.

ACTON TO ST. VINCENT

(Enclosed in Lord St. Vincent's, 27th April, 1799.)

21st March, 1799.

My Lord,— . . . I must return to your Lordship the best, extensive and most sensible thanks from their Sicilian Majesties for your loyal attachment to their and the common cause, and for

the zeal proved by so many essential services rendered to their Majesties by your direction, constant support and assistance, as well as for the expressions mentioned on their behalf in your last letter to me.

I must acknowledge to your Lordship, with the most sincere assertion, that their Sicilian Majesties feel with a true and well-grounded gratitude all their obligations for your continual proofs of loyalty, and the repeated useful protection of the British forces under your command.

Amongst these their Majesties reckon, with proper acknowledgement, your Lordship's demand in strong terms to Lord Spencer, of a reinforcement, the help of the English squadron for the strait blockade of Naples, and for striking the necessary blow to recover that capital from the tyranny of the invaders, now weak in number, but which may be increased. We have fifteen thousand Turks, it is true, at the King's disposal along the Adriatic shore, but without the Russians, which in number twelve thousand cannot reach Zara or [Corfu] before the end of April, we do not dare employ the Turks. The people of all the provinces of the kingdom of Naples, faithful to their King, should too much suffer by receiving such allies and co-operators with them without the Russians to keep them in awe and order. The English forces only are our only support and hope for the wished success. While the two regiments from Ireland keep guarded the citadel of Messina and have an eye upon Malta, the squadron may act in Naples Bay, the Russian and Turk ships shall appear there also, since the fall of Corfu in[to] their hands; but we cannot keep them long in this service, as they must bring us the Russian troops over

from Dalmatia to the Neapolitan coast. We rely therefore in your Lordship's powerful and wished for constant assistance. The reinforcements expected will, on your Lordship's promises, relieve [realise ?] our sanguine hopes and expectation of an happy change of our present situation. I present you my infinite thanks for your kind expressions in my favour and have the honour to be with the highest regard and esteem,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and most humble servant,
J. ACTON.

GRENVILLE TO SPENCER

Dropmore. 9th June, 1799.

My dear Lord,—Though the enclosed is hardly worth your reading, I send it you on account of what is said of the measure mentioned in my No. 22 to him. That measure was the recall of the flotilla from the mouth of the Elbe. I had seen letters from Holland that had made me doubt whether we were right in that resolution. My brother gives us, however, reason to expect more detailed communication from him on the subject. I write to-day to Dundas, to suggest to him the great importance of putting some troops at Lord St. Vincent's disposal for taking the Island of Hières if he wishes it; I have always heard this spoken of as an easy operation, and one that insured the blockade of Toulon.¹ Probably

¹ Dundas wrote to Grenville, 10th June: 'If the possession of the island you mention would have the effect of enabling Lord St. Vincent more effectually to blockade Toulon, it is certainly most desirable, and is an additional ground of regret in the deficiency of our offensive force. By the dispatches which went some time ago, Lord St. Vincent, for the safety of Minorca, is entitled to make a call upon the Portugal force,

you know much better how the fact is in this respect.

Ever yours most truly,

GRENVILLE.

I have no dispatch from Berlin by this mail, only this private letter.

SPENCER TO ST. VINCENT

27th June, 1799.

My Lord,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 27th April and 10th May, the former enclosing an extract from one from Lord Nelson of 20th March, and a copy of another from him of the 29th, and a copy of one from General Acton of 21st March, and of one from Captain Troubridge of the 22nd of the same month transmitting several enclosures. I shall observe but little on the contents of those several communications, further than returning you my thanks for them, as they relate to circumstances now long past, and which will actually have been nearly obliterated by the very interesting events which have since taken place. I regret to see in these letters the symptoms of unnecessary uneasiness in the subject of Sir Sidney Smith's correspondence, and I am afraid that the order sent to him to send away all the ships under his command except his own may probably produce inconveniences to the prosecution of the service in the Levant if it should happen, as it very well

and likewise to call for one regiment from Gibraltar. I can extend that liberty to the other object by to-morrow's dispatches, but I do not perceive that I have the means to do more at the present moment without disturbing the arrangement I have made to be ready to execute our engagements at the Isle of Walcheren, if called upon for that purpose' (*Dropmore Papers*, vol. v. p. 87).

may, to arrive at a time when the co-operation of these ships may be much wanted to impede the progress of the French army on the coast of Syria. I must at the same time express my entire concurrence in opinion with Lord Nelson on the subject of permitting any of the French to retire unmolested from Egypt, as I think every motive of policy should prompt us to prevent their return to Europe by all the means in our power. I am sorry that Captain Troubridge's enterprise against the ships in Alexandria was so unfortunately prevented from taking place, as it would have been a very important blow to the enemy to have destroyed them; and in alluding to Captain Troubridge I cannot omit mentioning to your Lordship that I have received within these few days a letter from him by which it appears that as late as the 4th of March he still continued to suppose that he was labouring under the disapprobation of the Admiralty on account of his first lieutenant not being promoted with the rest after the Battle of the Nile. I confess I was much surprised as well as mortified to find that he still continued under that mistake, and I must appeal to your Lordship to satisfy him that in one of the very first letters I wrote to you after the news of that action reached me, I very particularly desired that the circumstances might be explained to him, and that his first lieutenant might be promoted on the earliest opportunity, in order to convince Captain Troubridge that we were not insensible of his meritorious services.

In answer to your letter of the 10th of May I can only say that I had the greatest satisfaction in observing the decision and spirit of the measures which you had adopted on the entrance of the Brest fleet into the Mediterranean. I trusted in

my former experience of your conduct, and concluded that if they passed the Straits you would soon follow them, and in that confidence I confess I felt but little anxiety on the subject further than what arose from the apprehension of their first appearance in case by accident they had reached Cadiz before the notice arrived of their approach. Lord Keith appears to have done very well indeed in the situation in which he found himself, and I trust that with the force that will now be at your disposal in those seas, and with the advantage which the Spaniards appear to have given us by retiring into Cartagena, we may look for some very satisfactory events in the course of the summer, and may flatter ourselves that we shall add materially by our operations afloat to the great and important effects which cannot fail to be produced by the rapid and brilliant successes of the combined Russian and Austrian armies on shore.

I only wish you could be a witness to the confidence which the whole country here unanimously place in your abilities, and see the perfect satisfaction with which they appear to be impressed by knowing that so large a force as is by this time acting under your orders, is placed in such hands ; if you could see this I think it would make you amends for all the anxious moments which your difficult situation must inevitably produce, and though I am aware that no such additional inducement is required, which add to the motives which have already produced those achievements on which the public opinion is so justly founded.

Believe me, my Lord, with great truth,

Your very obedient humble servant,

SPENCER.

SPENCER TO ST. VINCENT

29th June, 1799.

My Lord,—You will be informed by this conveyance of the very handsome compliment the Emperor of Russia has paid to us by presenting his Majesty with the *Leander*, which ship fell to the share of the Russian squadron in the partition of spoil at Corfu. I thought it was an attention due to Count Woronzow, the Russian Minister here, to appoint his friend and protégé, Captain Halliday, whom I had promoted at his request to the rank of Commander, and who happens to be known personally to the Emperor of Russia himself, to the command of that ship; however as Captain Halliday is abroad at present in the *Woolwich* at the Cape of Good Hope, your Lordship will be directed to put some one to act in the *Leander* in his absence.

I cannot miss the opportunity which this subject affords me of apprizing your Lordship that the conduct and views of the Court of Russia at this time are so much in unison with those of his Majesty, and so entire a cordiality appears now fortunately to be established between the two Courts, that it is very much wished here that whenever there may be an opportunity of cultivating and encouraging the good understanding that prevails, every advantage should be taken of it to do so. I am the rather induced to mention this subject, as I have observed in one or two letters which have reached me of late from Malta that some jealousy appears to be entertained there of the views of Russia on that island; but as the very explicit declarations which have been made on that subject by the

Emperor of Russia are calculated to make us quite easy on that head, we are very anxious that nothing of that kind should appear to subsist, and that the same cordial agreement and co-operation should prevail between the forces of the two countries which have been established between their Governments.

I have the honour to be, with great truth,
Your Lordship's very obedient
humble servant,
SPENCER.

SPENCER TO ST. VINCENT

25th July, 1799.

My Lord,—I have the honour to acknowledge your Lordship's letter of the 16th ultimo, which only reached me this morning and I am truly concerned to find that your health has obliged you to retire from the command of the fleet, especially at so critical and interesting a moment. I need not say how anxious we are to hear again from Gibraltar, as the nature of the accounts we receive will have an incalculable effect on the whole state of the war not only at sea, but all over Europe. It will give me the greatest satisfaction to find that your Lordship is again able to resume your situation, but if you should at length be obliged to return to England, you will not find any one of your friends and admirers impressed with a more sincere regard and admiration of you than

Your very obedient humble servant,
SPENCER.

SECTION II

SIDNEY SMITH IN THE LEVANT

October 1798 to December 1800

GRENVILLE TO SPENCER

Dropmore. 3rd October, 1798.

My dear Lord,—I cannot resist beginning this letter with repeating my congratulations to you;¹ the more I hear and the more I think of this great event, the more its importance rises in my estimation. I think I have begun to alter my mind again about Sir Sidney Smith—you must not laugh at me for the unstableness of my opinion—but I think till the French are actually driven out of Egypt and the Archipelago there still remains something to be done by the Turks and Russians; and for that something they must have the aid of at least one British ship of the line and a frigate or two. If a ship of the line is to go, I suppose the difference between the Tigre and a worse is not very material. If on the whole you are satisfied with this opinion I will write one more dispatch to Whitworth and Smith to say so, and the messenger may go on Friday. It would be a pity to delay them, as the Turks may change their mind, as their own danger grows less pressing. I fear we shall have made the peace of Austria for her by this event.

Ever yours most truly,

GRENVILLE.

¹ On the battle of the Nile.

ST. VINCENT TO SIDNEY SMITH

(Enclosed in Sir Sidney Smith's, 27th November, 1798.)

Rosia House, Gibraltar.
27th November, 1798.

Sir,—I have the honour to acquaint you that the Island of Gozo surrendered upon capitulation to Captain Ball, who commands the blockade of Malta, and is now under the dominion of the King of the two Sicilies. Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson is at Naples, where I request you will forward my dispatches and the enclosed letter by the quickest and safest means on your arrival at Syracuse.

Captain Hood continues to command the blockade of Alexandria, from whence the foreign shipping impressed by the French are trying to escape. One Neapolitan vessel reached Naples and the master reported that a number were intercepted and burnt by the British squadron, and their crews sent back to Alexandria, according to the orders given to Captain Hood by Lord Nelson.

Heartily wishing you all manner of success in your mission, I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

16th January, 1799.

My Lord,—An arrogant letter, written by Sir Sidney Smith to Sir William Hamilton, when he joined the squadron forming the blockade at

Malta, has wounded Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson to the quick, as per enclosed, who besides feels himself affronted by his embassy and separate command, which compels me to put this strange man immediately under his Lordship's orders, or the King may be deprived of his important services, and those of many valuable officers, as superior to Sir Sidney Smith, in all points, as he is to the most ordinary of men. I experienced a trace of the presumptuous character of this young man during his short stay at Gibraltar, which I passed over, that it might not appear to your Lordship I was governed by prejudice in my conduct towards him.

Your Lordship's very faithful
and obedient servant,
ST. VINCENT.

SIDNEY SMITH TO ST. VINCENT

(*Enclosed in Lord St. Vincent's, 16th January, 1799.*)

Tigre, off Malta. 11th December, 1798.

My Lord,—I have the honour to inform you of my arrival in his Majesty's ship under my command off this Island, in my way to Syracuse; but learning that Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson is not expected there, I have delivered your Lordship's dispatches to Captain Ball, as likewise the sails in perfect good order, having had favourable weather for drying them agreeable to your Lordship's directions. I have written to the Rear-Admiral to open a correspondence with him, and have sent him a similar cipher to that left with Mr. Tucker for your Lordship's use. I have likewise thought it conducive to the good of the

service, under the present situation of the fleet, to leave one with Captain Ball, to whom I have explained the manner of using it.

I shall now, having Captain Ball's concurrence, proceed without loss of time in the execution of the latter part of your Lordship's orders, and shall be happy to receive your further commands. Meanwhile I presume I am at liberty to dispose of the force I find in the Levant (the captains of his Majesty's ships there being junior to me), in the manner best calculated to annoy the enemy, and prove the utility of our alliance to the Ottoman Ministry, and the Turks in general. I understand Captains Hood, Hallowell, and Dixon are at present off Alexandria, and there are some authenticated reports of their having burnt some of the ships; it is likewise said here that Corfu has surrendered to the combined Turkish and Russian Fleet. I spoke with a Danish brig from Zante, who said they had proceeded thither from the latter island, and I think it necessary to mention that I spoke this vessel under Spanish colours, officers and men being completely disguised, lest your Lordship should hear of a Spanish brig having been seen on the coast of Barbary along which I steered according to the hint your Lordship gave me, as also to profit by the land winds in the night, and the sea breezes in the day, which have brought me hither in what may be reckoned a short time. I beg leave to express my grateful sense of your Lordship's kindness to me, and to subscribe myself, with much respect and sincere esteem, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and faithful humble servant,

W. SIDNEY SMITH.

ST. VINCENT TO SIDNEY SMITH

Le Souverain, Gibraltar.
16th January, 1799.

Sir,—I have to acknowledge your letter dated off Malta 11th December, but cannot help expressing the utmost surprise and disapprobation of your giving orders to any ship not specially appointed to serve under you by Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson; and to prevent any further misunderstanding of the intentions of the Admiralty, which never went further than your commanding two ships, there being so many officers of high and distinguished merit senior to you in the Levant, I judge it expedient to put you under the immediate command of Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

ST. VINCENT.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

Tigre, off Alexandria.
20th January, 1799.

My dear Lord,—In addition to what will come before you officially, both at your own Board and in the Cabinet, I enclose you three papers which will show you exactly what we have before us to do. As to the means of doing it, I wish they were greater, but we will do it, or fail and begin again, which will always keep the enemy in hot water, prevent his doing whatever he may be doing without interruption, diminish his numbers, in a degree operate a diversion in

favour of Murad Bey, who must be hard pressed by this time.

Your Lordship's faithful humble servant,
W. SIDNEY SMITH.

SIDNEY SMITH TO NELSON ¹

Tigre, Constantinople.
24th January, 1799.

My Lord,—I did myself the honour of acquainting you by my letter of the 12th December of my having been sent to this country with the appointment of Minister Plenipotentiary conjointly with my brother, Mr. Spencer Smith, in addition to my naval rank, his Majesty having judged it expedient for his service that the officer who was destined to co-operate with the naval forces of this country should unite the two characters in his person the better to preserve that good understanding which should subsist between allies.

Our Treaty of Alliance was signed on the 5th inst. in the execution of which it is necessary that we should contribute our utmost endeavours towards restoring Egypt to the dominion of the Porte. You, my Lord, have done much, very much, towards it even before we had incurred the positive obligation, but much is expected of us still, considering the infant state of their marine and their absolute inability to equip any considerable naval force before the spring when the grand expedition against Egypt is to sail from hence. They trust entirely to us for the complete blockade of Alexandria and co-operation with Gezzar Pacha in his attack in the meantime.

¹ Printed in Barrow's *Life of Sidney Smith*.

Now it depends upon you, my Lord, to say what means you can afford me to do this effectually so as to preserve the advantages you have achieved for the cause. I was told by the Commander-in-Chief at Gibraltar that I should find a certain force devoted to this service, he asked whether I was acquainted with Captain Hood, meaning to do me the favour to let me have such officers with me as I had confidence in. I answered him that he could not have named anyone I should be more happy to serve with. His Lordship will of course have suggested to you this measure, leaving the disposition of course to your decision, considering the necessity of direction being vested in an officer detached in such a command as your Lordship's. I mention this therefore in the hope that if Captain Hood should have quitted the station to rejoin you he may be sent back to meet me off Alexandria--whither I am going as soon as I have put the feeble means of this arsenal (which is placed at my disposal by the Sultan) in train. To follow me two bombs and seven more gunboats are all the vessels it can produce for coast service. I have caused five more of the latter to be laid down ready for the reception of guns I expect from England in H.M. ship *Charon*, Lord Camelford. Captain Hallowell, with whom I have had the satisfaction of serving in the West Indies last war, has, I am informed, drawn every advantage possible out of the ten Turkish gunboats stationed at Aboukir. I hope he will remain on the station to show us the way by his gallant example. I trust at any rate to finding some force on that coast and look with anxious hope to your supporting a branch of the service which cannot fail to interest your mind although you are now employed nearer the source

from whence the mischief which inundates Europe flows, and consequently much more to the purpose of its annihilation, than if you were at any more distant branch ; still, however, that branch must not be allowed to become a second source itself, which considering the means of seduction successfully employed by Buonaparte among the Copts and Jews, if not the Arabs, may be the case if he is left in the tranquil enjoyment of his conquest. My brother desires to be considered as joining with me in most cordial expressions of regard and respect although he does not write not to make a useless repetition.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,
Your Lordship's faithful and
obedient servant,
W. SIDNEY SMITH.

TROUBRIDGE TO SPENCER

Culloden, off Alexandria.
17th February, 1799.

My Lord,—Although I am not authorised to correspond with your Lordship, I take the liberty of sending you copies of letters I found on a Frenchman, habited as a Turk, and who was going as a spy to Constantinople. I have sent him to the Grand Signor, with all his history, who I trust will punish him as he deserves. I have great pleasure in informing your Lordship that the plague is destroying the French in the whole-sale ; in four months, I do not believe there will be a Frenchman existing in Egypt, particularly if the Bashaws and Beys come forward as they promise to do. Many French posts have not

two relieves. I hear they are drawing in their advanced posts from Silehiah on the borders of Syria. Mr. Smith, our Minister, has all the couriers and papers published by Buonaparte, which I have requested him when he has shown them to the Porte to forward to your Lordship. I am anxiously waiting for Sir Sidney Smith, to resign the command to him agreeable to my orders. The Turkish line of battle ship I have got out of Alexandria, and sent under the charge of Captain Hallowell to Rhodes, to be delivered to Hassan Bey, the Governor of that island, the captain of her being a suspicious character, as your Lordship will see by the enclosed agreement he had made with the French, which I found concealed. I have just taken and shall destroy seven ships and brigs, belonging to Sweden, Denmark and Ragusa, who have been employed in the transport service, and brought troops from Toulon and Civita Vecchia, and had bills for the freights, with recommendations for their good conduct. They have all gone through the ceremony of protesting, if that is a salvo, their people would constantly pursue their illicit practice. I hope it will meet your Lordship's approbation. I have been constantly bombarding the ships in the harbour every day and night the weather would permit, though I am sorry to say, as yet with little success. Your Lordship may rely on it, I shall exert every nerve to destroy them if possible.

I have the honour to be with great respect,

Your Lordship's most obedient

and humble servant,

T. TROUBRIDGE.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

Tigre, going through the Dardanelles.

22nd February, 1799.

My dear Lord,—As there is no getting these fair weather birds to navigate in winter, our example exciting only astonishment without emulation, I have determined not to wait for any of the Turkish ships ordered to be equipped, to proceed with me under my direction, but have given them their rendezvous—Rhodes; and am going by myself in execution of Lord Nelson's orders, a copy of which I enclose. Subsequent however to the date of them I understand Captain Troubridge went from Sicily to Alexandria, so that I shall be embarrassed how to explain to the Turkish commanders that the orders of which I am the bearer of from the Porte to put themselves under my directions in the attack of Alexandria according to the plan agreed on in conference with the Ministers, is no longer practicable, as I am not at liberty to assume that direction. I will, however, do the best I can to conciliate everything for the good of the service and the cause, having that and that only at heart. I have set Spuring to work, and the gunboats he is employed to build in the arsenal at Constantinople already show their form on the stocks and may be launched within the month. He is at the same time building some launches after the model of ours, and the foundry is at work casting light brass for the longboats of the transports. This, in addition to what I hope to create on the spot in a short time, will give us Alexandria and the course of the Nile as the water rises. Unfortunately it is at the lowest in April. However, where floating is impracticable walking

in the water is not, and some way or other we will get on and close with these so distant heroes. Gezzar Pasha has promised to move the instant the fast of Ramazan is over, viz. 6th of March, when I calculate on being with him at least with the Tigre and her contents. My proposition to leave on board the light artillery we brought out in her, and to have it landed under the direction of my French friend whom you know, has been adopted. The Porte has furnished exercised gunners for these pieces, and some more in addition, but these I have not dared take into the ship with me for fear of the plague and disorders of all kinds. They will consequently follow as soon as possible. I am raising a regiment of Albanians, ambitious men who have offered to serve as marines from the Morea. My brother will forward the Constantinople equipments in my absence.

Adieu, my dear Lord,

Yours faithfully,

W. S. SMITH.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

Tigre, off Rhodes. 27th February, 1799.

My dear Lord,—I find a letter here from Captain Troubridge saying that he anxiously waits my arrival to give up the command of the blockade to me; thus the arrangement of his going there, although made subsequent to Lord Nelson's letter to me of the 31st December, is not a new one, which I thought it was by the difference of the dates. I have perused the articles of information sent your Lordship by Captain Troubridge and shall endeavour to profit by the

disposition of the enemy to withdraw from Egypt for which I have already made my arrangements according to agreement with the Ottoman Minister.

I have conferred with Hassan Bey, and visited his flotilla, dockyard, &c. He is very well disposed and desirous to comply entirely with my wishes according to the orders of his Government, of which I was the bearer, but he has nothing ready and without money, which he has not, he cannot move.

I do not hesitate to say that unless we equip a flotilla manned by natives under an English flag we shall never have an efficient one, or anything but a thing to take care of on an open wild coast which Egypt is at the best of times; the hotter the weather the fresher the northerly sea breezes.

I am, my dear Lord,

Ever your most sincere friend

and obedient humble servant,

W. S. SMITH.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

Tigre, off Alexandria. 7th March, 1799.

My dear Lord,—As I am writing to M. Foresti, a Turkish ship has come down from the eastward with the letter, of which a copy is enclosed, from our factotum at Acre, which I am enabled to send through M.F. to your Lordship by the vessel which I am about to dispatch to Zante, to bring up some Albanian recruits, now, as your Lordship sees, become more necessary than ever. I have already answered my Acre correspondent, and written again Gezzar Pasha, pointing out

what he can yet do to save his capital, by constantly harassing the French, rather than risking a pitched battle, and also what I can do on the coast to support him. I have detached the Theseus to the eastward as desired. Captain Troubridge not having any frigates to give me in compliance with my official request to him has left me the Lion which I leave off the western port of Alexandria while I look out on the eastern, on a route from whence recent movements indicate an intention in the enemy to send something eastward. You see, my Lord, how insufficient the force at present under my orders without numbers of small vessels is, for the work in hand. The appearance of our two decks keeps the eight frigates they have in the old port in check. The three French-built ones, and two Venetians lately coppered there, are evidently ready for a start, which corroborates recent intelligence [that] they would rather go home than go on.

Your faithful humble servant,
W. SIDNEY SMITH.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

Tigre, off Alexandria. 7th March, 1799.

My dear Lord, — Having received an offer from an Albanian chief to furnish me as many men as I choose, on the footing of our marines, I have found myself very fortunate in such a resource at a time when I feel the want of men to land and secure the posts that the enemy would surrender to us, though they would defend them the last extremity against the Turks for fear of the ill-usage their prisoners meet with. I have

thus found myself under the necessity of accepting this offer, and have accordingly sent a transport down to bring up some. I shall write officially about this when I have seen the thing realised sufficiently to enable me to speak more positively as to the efficiency of these men, who, it is understood, can row as well as use firearms. I shall put them on the Tigre's supernumerary list, rated according to their qualifications. I see no other way of satisfying their officers by a proportionate addition of pay, than by bearing as many numbers after the manner of widow's men as will make up the proportion; but for the deviation from the established rule of a supernumerary list, I must have an order from the Admiralty. Further, these people require to be paid monthly on the spot which is a *sine qua non* it seems. The French troops write on their quarters, '*point d'argent, point de soldats,*' and complain much of being seven months in arrear; thus they will not be able to recruit their army in this way by the Albanians, who, like the Swiss, quit their mountains and the coast of Morea to serve the neighbouring parties for present pay. They are the only people for this sort of service, and if we had a few of them just now, I could profit by the weakness of Aboukir Castle, as announced in my letter to Beauchamp (a copy of which is enclosed) and cut off the only channel by which Alexandria receives supplies at present. I have my doubts of the Turkish troops promised arriving in time, or being efficient and active when they do; besides I can only expect to influence them by example, and our own marines are too essential to a cruising ship to be detached for anything but a *coup de main*. We cannot retain posts with them without having a port

to secure the ships in the interim, and there is none on this coast. What we do, we must do before the May and June sea breezes set in, and be already in a fair way to profit by the rise of the Nile to send the flotilla up it ; without that we may correspond to the right and left with Gezzar Pasha, Murad Bey, &c., but we shall never come to blows with the enemy, I see.

Your very obedient and
faithful humble servant,
W. SIDNEY SMITH.

SPENCER TO ST. VINCENT

11th March, 1799.

My Lord, — I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th January enclosing those from Lord Nelson of the 28th and 30th December, and that from Sir Sidney Smith of the 11th December, with your Lordship's answer to Sir Sidney. Nothing could possibly give me more concern than that Lord Nelson should think me capable of taking any measure which I thought could in the most distant manner convey any mortification to him, or be construed into a want of respect and regard for him both as an officer and a man, or any other but the warmest and most lively sense of his very extraordinary and brilliant services. I feel, however, very confident that the measure in question of sending Sir Sidney Smith to serve in the Mediterranean, under all these circumstances and in the manner in which it was taken, cannot fairly be imputed to any such motive ; and having as high an opinion of Lord Nelson's candour and

fairness as I have of his other more brilliant qualifications, I am content to rest my justification with him (if I need any) on his own decision, when he is correctly informed of what was my intention: which I cannot help thinking must not have been the case if he could suppose that I had sent a junior captain to supersede either him or the other brave and distinguished officers who were serving under him and were Sir Sidney's seniors in any part of their operations. This matter will however be cleared up by your Lordship's having put Sir Sidney under Lord Nelson's command, which I always understood and supposed he would be of course; and as to the presumptuous conduct of that officer when he was with your Lordship at Gibraltar I can only regret that he should have so conducted himself, but not being apprized of the particulars of it, I can say nothing more about it.

I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's most obedient

humble servant,

SPENCER.

ST. VINCENT TO SIDNEY SMITH

(*Enclosed in Sir Sidney Smith's, 9th August, 1799.*)

Le Souverain, Gibraltar.

2nd May, 1799.

Sir,—I have to acknowledge your letters of the 11th January and 23rd February, and I am sorry to observe that the communication of the Treaty entered into by the Allied Powers has not produced the smallest effect in our favour with the Emperor of Morocco, and I have great

reason to apprehend both Tunis and Tripoli have been lately intriguing with the French, and the Regency of Algiers has relaxed very much in the vigour shown in the first instance by that power. In reply to that part of your letter of the 23rd of February, which relates to the stipulations the British Commissioners have entered into for the blockade of Alexandria and protection of Syria, I am at a loss to conjecture under what authority so large a British naval force could have been pledged, when it must have occurred to his Majesty's Ministers that I was not furnished with the means to fulfil such a contract; much less am I at this moment, when Minorca is threatened with a descent, Naples requires to be blockaded, that of Malta to be continued, and the Spanish Fleet at Cadiz preparing to come out with twenty-eight ships of the line and numerous frigates, to oppose sixteen of the line and not one frigate to oppose them. And you must recollect that I never held out an expectation to you of more than one ship of the line, in addition to the Tigre, and until that ship (the Theseus) joined, I told you, I would desire Lord Nelson to furnish a frigate. The Turks and Russians, having reduced the islands in the Morea, are able to cover the whole coast of Syria and Egypt, and to them you must have recourse for the assistance which neither I nor Lord Nelson can give you without abandoning Italy, Sicily, Malta and Minorca. I thank you for the copies of your correspondence with Mr. Nepean and Lord Spencer, and allowing me to read your last letter to his Lordship. I recommend that all communications in future be made to Lord Nelson, as I cannot approve of a captain having a detached squadron under his orders

carrying on a public correspondence through any other medium.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Rosia House, Gibraltar.

13th April, 1799.

My Lord,—I certainly did conceive it to have been your Lordship's intention that Sir Sidney Smith should act independently of any other officer in the Mediterranean except myself, and that he was only put under my orders *pro forma*; and I clearly understood from his conversation that the great object of joining him in the commission with his brother, Mr. Spencer Smith, was to give him place above the Turkish and Russian sea officers serving in the Levant; and he expected, under the rank and precedence arising out of this commission, to command the combined fleets, and I so stated it to Lord Nelson as the best apology I could make for permitting a captain of Sir Sidney's standing to pass through his Lordship's district without putting him under his command. If I have erred, it has arisen from zeal to fulfil the wishes of your Lordship and his Majesty's Ministers upon the subject in question; as the business is now settled in a manner which seems to meet your approbation, I shall not trouble your Lordship with a recital of what happened here; and which I never should have hinted at but for the indiscretion of Sir Sidney in alarming Lord Nelson, and the meritorious captains serving under his orders.

Nor will I renew the subject of Captain Newhouse, although it has wounded me more than I can express.

I have the honour to be with great esteem and regard,

Your Lordship's very faithful
and obedient servant,
ST. VINCENT.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Rosia House, Gibraltar.
27th April, 1799.

My Lord,—I have the honour to enclose extracts of letters lately received from Rear-Admiral Lord Nelson,¹ Sir John Acton, and Captain Troubridge, and copies of the orders the former has found it necessary to give to Sir Sidney Smith, who commenced his command before Alexandria by counteracting the system laid down by his Lordship, and which always appeared to me fraught with the most consummate wisdom; and as it is evident, from the instructions which Buonaparte gave to Consul Beauchamp, copies of which are also enclosed, that he and his army are in the most perilous situation, every means should be used to prevent a single Frenchman from escaping the rage of the Turks. I sincerely lament that the destruction of the ships-of-war and transports in the port of Alexandria was found impracticable. Having pointed out to Lord Nelson the propriety of Sir Sidney Smith commanding when a Turkish squadron was likely

¹ The enclosures from Lord Nelson are those in his letters of 18th March to Sidney Smith and 20th March to St. Vincent, printed in Nicolas' *Dispatches*, vol. iii. pp. 296, 297.

to be employed, his Lordship has very judiciously withdrawn Captain Troubridge, and appointed him to command the blockade of Naples ; my only apprehension is that Sir Sidney, completely enveloped in the importance of his ambassadorial character, will not attend to the practical part of his military profession ; I have the more dread of this, because I know the Tigre to be in a woeful state of discipline, which will probably produce sickness and all its concomitant evils.

I have the honour to be with great regard and esteem,

Your Lordship's very faithful
and obedient servant,
ST. VINCENT.

TROUBRIDGE TO ST. VINCENT

(Enclosed in Lord St. Vincent's, 27th April, 1799.)

Culloden. 22nd March, 1799.

My Lord,—Your Lordship's letter of the 22nd October, by some accident, did not find me until my return here a few days ago, from my unsuccessful bombardment ; the mortars burst ! I fitted out seven Danes and Swedes and Ragusan vessels as fireships, which had been employed as transports by the French, and, distressing to tell, when all was ready and only waiting for a fair wind to send them in, a violent gale of wind came on and drove them all on shore or I had no doubt of success in burning the miscreants. Lord Nelson will inform your Lordship of our having got the Turkish ship out of Alexandria, and the spy I took in her is sent to Constantinople with all his instructions (and a strong recommendation

for decapitation). I have the honour to enclose some of them. The weather for three weeks prior to our leaving Alexandria, was so bad that we had no communication. The plague is making dreadful havoc among them. I believe Buona-parte is gone into Syria; the plague is worse there than in Egypt, the greater part of General Desaix's detachment in Upper Egypt is gone blind; 1000 are at Alexandria, to be sent to France. I left Sir Sidney, giving him everything he could want that he may not be able to say the blame lays on Lord Nelson if he should not succeed. The Turks promise everything, but will I fear perform little, if they should once get the better they would certainly massacre the whole; the French daily levy some contribution and commit every violence, still, I have more faith in the plagues destroying them than the Turks. All Turkey does not produce more than 6000 infantry, the others are all rabble. Sir Sidney talks so large, as a member of the Divan and *plennippo*, that he made me sick. I can learn nothing to be depended on about this poor distracted country, but I fear Naples is lost to the King. I am so busy fitting, &c., that I have no time to write more.

I have the honour to be [&c.],

T. TROUBRIDGE.

SPENCER TO GRENVILLE

7th May, 1799.

My dear Lord,—I send you copies of some letters which I have had from Sir Sidney Smith lest your dispatches from his brother should not contain all the information they convey; I con-

fess I don't much like the account of the French penetrating into Syria, and of the dispositions of the inhabitants in that country to receive, and the armies to run away from, them. I have never seen a copy of the Treaty which has actually been signed by the Smiths with the Porte, but I do not know what to make of what appears about it in these and some former letters; they seem to have entered into stipulations that were not in our contemplation, both with respect to the British force to be employed on the coast of Egypt and to inviting the French to leave Egypt and return to Europe. Sir Sidney appears to be of opinion that the disadvantages of this latter measure will be done away by their being considered as prisoners of war; but I cannot see it in that light, because the instant they set their feet either in France or Italy they will make very little scruple of serving either against us or some of our allies, and if it was only for the sake of example I should be extremely sorry that any considerable proportions of that army were even to return on any conditions.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Yours very faithfully,

SPENCER.

GRENVILLE TO SPENCER

9th May, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I have, as I expected, received from Woronzow a heavy complaint against Sir Sidney Smith for his conduct in the negotiation of Kléber's capitulation. May I give him to understand in my answer that Sir Sidney Smith will by this time have been withdrawn from that

station? If this has been done, it will be a better proof of disavowal than all the assurances I could give.

Ever yours,
GRENVILLE.

SPENCER TO GRENVILLE

9th May, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Whether Sir Sidney Smith will actually by this time have been withdrawn from the Levant station I know not, but when we received the account of the capitulation I wrote to Lord Keith suggesting to him the expediency of employing Sir Sidney Smith elsewhere, and I think it most probable he may act on that suggestion. However, I will take an immediate opportunity which now offers of repeating it.

Yours faithfully,
SPENCER.

CAPTAIN ADAM TO SIDNEY SMITH

(*Enclosed in Sir Sidney Smith's, 9th August, 1799.*)

Albatross, off Suez. 13th June, 1799.

Sir,—I am this instant honoured by the receipt of your letters dated 16th of May at St. John D'Acre, and 30th of May at Jaffa. Commodore Blankett has not yet arrived in the Red Sea, nor has any intelligence been received of his squadron since the end of October 1798. It was then seen near the entrance of the Mozambique Channel, by a ship on her passage to India. The only

men-of-war in this Gulf are the Centurion and Albatross, but a reinforcement from India is daily expected. The Centurion and Albatross arrived at Suez on the 28th of April. Captain Rainier's intentions were to destroy the craft the Arabs reported the French to have at Suez. We found here only three small gunboats, which were in such a situation as to render any attempts to cut them out almost impracticable, nor indeed were they worth the risk attending it. The Centurion left the sea of Suez on the 9th of May and proceeded down the Gulf for the protection of the trade, &c. Captain Rainier has given me orders to remain here, till I have only a sufficiency of provisions to go to Jeddah. I therefore shall be obliged to sail about the 20th instant, unless I receive a supply, which I am particularly sorry for as I might be useful to you by conveying dispatches to the Senior Officer in these seas or to Jeddah. The French have within this fortnight received a reinforcement of 80 or 100 men from Cairo and are every day employed in fortifying a hill which commands the town. There are not more than 6 guns at Suez, they are advantageously placed, and the water is so shoal off Suez that the Albatross can scarcely get within gunshot, so that the French have not much to apprehend from an attack by sea except by gunboats. The garrison of Suez consists of about 200 French of different descriptions, a part of whom are sailors (employed in fitting a corvette which lies far up the harbour at the back of the town): there are also about 180 Maltese, and 200 galley slaves. I have received this information with regard to the force at Suez by some Maltese, who have deserted to the Albatross since the Centurion left this. I was in hopes

with the assistance of Mahomed Elfei, one of the Beys of Egypt from whom I have received several letters on the subject, to have greatly distressed the French by attacking the town by sea, as well as my means would allow by gunboats &c., and thereby make a diversion in favour of his troops, who he proposed should attack it by land, but I am sorry to say that I have received information that his force is not adequate to the attack. I therefore must give up all thoughts of it. I will by the earliest opportunity, which I trust will be to-morrow, send to Captain Wilson a copy of your letter as you desire, and also to Captain Rainier, or the senior officer in the Red Sea. If I receive any information which I think you may wish to be made acquainted with, I will forward it by the best means in my power. It is now some time since we have heard from India, the last accounts mention a probability of a war with Tippoo, that a large army was forming in the Carnatic, and that our army from the Malabar Coast had ascended the Ghauts; there is a strong naval force off Mangalore.

Permit me, Sir, to offer you my congratulations on your successes.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

CHAS. ADAM.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

Tigre, off Aboukir. 9th August, 1799.

My dear Lord,— . . . I have sent the *Theseus*, Captain Stiles, and the *Cameleon*, Mr. (I hope Captain) Canes, with two Turkish line of battle

ships to take care of, and to cruise well to the westward of Alexandria, to prevent the Bey of Bengazi forwarding supplies to Buonaparte, and to intercept Admiral Ganteaume, who I have reason to think will endeavour to sail with two frigates, a corvette and a brig. Perhaps Buonaparte himself may then slip his neck out of the collar, and leave Kléber to command. If so, Kléber will yield to the clamour of the army and treat for a passage home, when there is force enough collected against him to justify such a measure, and the means of conveying them on the spot. He is a soldier and no speculator on the conquest of India or on the fertility of the new colony; he had rather be on the Rhine than anywhere else, and all the rest had rather be anywhere else than in Egypt. Of this I have acquired proofs by our intercourse with them of late, and it is a pity not to be able to press them hard enough to make them decide on the evacuation. As to taking Alexandria by a regular siege it is practicable only by regular European troops, since they have fortified the two heights in the European way. 'Tis true their lines are too extensive, and would require an army to defend them as large as the whole efficient force Buonaparte has in Egypt, and if once completely blockaded by land as well as by sea, since there is nothing but rice in the town, the garrison would have to choose between that food with bad water and a passage home, and would no doubt prefer the latter. This is our only chance of taking that place; and as to upper Egypt the Mamelukes must try to rout Desaix out of the Fayum, but it will be a well-fought contest, for that division has taken root in that fertile country and it really is a flourishing colony under an

orderly military Government, raising revenue from the peasantry and wanting nothing but wine to make them satisfied. I mention to Lord Grenville a means of attacking them by the homeward bound conquerors of Seringapatam coming up the Red Sea with the spring monsoon, and assisting the natives to rout the invaders out; alone they never can do it completely, though they may and shall harass them perpetually. . . .

Ever, my dear Lord,

Yours faithfully,

W. S. SMITH.

SPENCER TO SIDNEY SMITH

28th September, 1799.

Dear Sir Sidney,—You will most probably by the same conveyance which brings you this letter be officially informed of the great and as I believe unprecedented honour which has been paid you by the thanks of the House of Commons for your services before Acre, which thanks I propose also to move in the House of Lords on the first day they sit after their present adjournment, the practice of our House not having allowed me to do it sooner. I call this an unprecedented honour, because I do not believe there is an instance of an officer of no higher a rank than a captain being either mentioned in so pointed a manner in the King's speech as you have been, or being thanked by Parliament. However, as you have thought fit to move out of the common and ordinary line even of brilliant service it is very proper for us to move out of the usual practice of remuneration. I have the satisfaction of

adding that it is not intended that the thanks should be quite barren of some substantial advantage, as it is in contemplation to bring forward a measure for granting you a pecuniary compensation the exact mode or even *quantum* of which is not yet fixed, but I rather believe it will be a Parliamentary pension of £500 a year. The form necessary to be gone through for this purpose will probably delay its completion till a late period of the Session. We have not heard anything more from you since you wrote off Mount Lebanon, but we are flattered with reports of your further successes on the coast of Egypt, which I trust may prove true. In the meanwhile I am happy to have it in my power to inform you that our poor friend Edward Cooke who had been so severely wounded in his very gallant and distinguished action with la Forte has since recovered, and is likely to do well. His Majesty has also been pleased to honour him with knight-hood on the occasion which will be conferred on him by Patent.

I need not say how glad I shall be to hear from you again and I remain, dear Sir Sidney,

Your very faithful friend

and humble servant,

SPENCER.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

Tigre, off Damietta. 22nd October, 1799.

My dear Lord,—Buonaparte's intention to escape to France being more than suspected I detached the *Theseus* to the westward with a Turkish squadron to cruise off a port 240 miles

to the westward of Alexandria, from whence I thought him likely to embark. I had direct intercourse with him by a flag of truce on the 6th of August, that day he set off for Cairo to make his triumphal entry with my obstinate colleague his prisoner, Mustapha Pasha. On the 12th I pushed over for Cyprus to get provisions for a long cruise, having apprized him of his recall, on purpose that he might embark when the coast was apparently clear. It was, however, impossible to get them, from the perverseness of the Turkish Governor, and the affluence of fugitives from Aboukir. I detached the *Theseus* on the 20th August to seek them from Caramania and Rhodes. . . .

On the 11th September, being apprehensive that the *Theseus* might not get down, I sent my first Lieutenant, Mr. England, with a letter to Lord Nelson to apprise him of my suspicion of Buonaparte's intention to go to France disguised. As to myself I was obliged to devote my whole attention to keep the Turkish forces together, and bring the reinforcements forward according to the wishes of the Porte, and this I have at length done, by bringing them here and the Vizir towards Jaffa. Wright is between him and me with the flotilla. I met the *Theseus* off Alexandria yesterday with two Turkish line of battle ships; she has seen nothing. The Arabs say Buonaparte is certainly gone, but I can't make out the exact date from their account. I enclose the *Theseus's* Journal, to show that she has done her best.

Your Lordship's faithful humble servant,
W. S. SMITH.

ELGIN TO SIDNEY SMITH

(Enclosed in Sir Sidney Smith's, 28th February, 1800.)

Constantinople. 30th November, 1799.

My dear Sir Sidney,—It was my first object in coming here to communicate very fully with you, but as your brother received letters from you immediately on my arrival, by which I found you was apprized of everything we knew at Constantinople relative to the correspondence established between the Grand Vizir and the French Generals, and had actually sent Major Bromley to the Turkish camp, with your sentiments on the French letters you had intercepted, I contented myself with one official letter by a Turkish messenger to say that I had made a point of your being a party with the Grand Vizir in any capitulation to be entered with the French troops, and that I considered you, as commanding his Majesty's ships in these seas, fully authorised to give every protection to the French who might quit Egypt in virtue of such capitulation. By the same conveyance I had the satisfaction of forwarding the newspapers from England, which contained the testimony borne in Parliament to your exploits and the votes of thanks passed on you and your officers and men. You must already be apprized of all that has taken place at the Turkish camp since that period, the further letters which have passed, and the disgrace of Raschid Effendi. These transactions would at any time call for the most vigilant attention on our part, but the circumstances of the war in Europe unfortunately present fresh and most urgent motives, which will I am sure appeal to

you, as having a particular connection with the operations in which you are engaged. A short time ago the Court of Russia had endeavoured, though without success, to learn from the Court of Vienna, on what ground the Commissaries attending the Austrian armies were directed to take possession of every conquest in Italy and Switzerland in the Emperor's name, and not in that of the lawful sovereign. This silence created suspicion at Petersburg and as it has been persevered in the Emperor of Russia has now withdrawn all his troops and everything appears as gloomy as it was six months ago, in unison between the two empires. Meanwhile accounts are received by this Government of the Emperor's having made an armistice with the French. On the other hand the expedition against Holland, though it has enabled us to take the Dutch Fleet, has however been obliged to abandon its attempts on the country, and the Duke of York has returned to England by capitulation. In this melancholy state of affairs, I feel myself doubly called upon to recommend every possible means that can aid in forcing the French out of Egypt, and prevent the loss of time on the part of the Turks, which the French evidently aim at gaining. In this conviction I have been with the Ottoman Ministers. I have represented to them the inferences obviously arising out of the reports made in France by Berthier and Buonaparte since their return thither—inferences which prove that the possession of Egypt is considered and meant an object of national importance, and that the strength of the French consists in the inability of the Turks to employ artillery capable of resisting and forcing them; and from these inferences I requested the Ottoman Government

to write fully to Lord Nelson, which was done yesterday by the *Phæton* frigate, to pay particular attention to the observations you have sent to them, especially for the promptitude in the provisions and succours to be afforded you, a point on which they assure me most positive orders are assured ; and likewise I have requested them to employ General Koehler, and the party under him, in the Grand Vizir's army, where they may be able to give that aid, on the want of which the French seem to place so much confidence. In this also the Ottoman Government have acknowledged the urgency of the conjecture, and although they attached great consequence to the works now carrying on by those officers at the Dardanelles, they have acquiesced in my demand, and are to send them away immediately.

Messrs. Bearcroft and Nicholson of the *Tigre* who came with us from Palermo proceed tomorrow by sea to join you, and as I shall have that opportunity of writing confidentially to you, I shall not detain the present express by further details. Meanwhile accept my most sincere good wishes, and the assurances that my most active exertions shall be heartily employed while here, for the success of your operations.

Believe me, my dear Sir Sidney, with sincere regard and respect,

Your most faithful humble servant,

ELGIN.

SPENCER TO SIDNEY SMITH

12th December, 1799.

Dear Sir Sidney,—I had great pleasure in receiving your letter of the 22nd October last,

for I confess from the very long interval that had elapsed since I last heard from you, I began to think that you had entirely given up all idea of corresponding with me.

The events which have happened in France since the return of Buonaparte, make it rather a doubtful case whether we should regret or not his having slipped through your fingers; but we are at all events very well disposed to give you full credit for having been apprized so early of his departure from Egypt. The conveyance which brings you this will at the same time apprise you of the sentiments entertained by Government here on the proposal made by the French, and apparently acquiesced in by the Turks, for the evacuation of Egypt by the former. I shall say nothing more particular on this subject, as you will be fully informed of the light in which we view it, and I hope that the instructions may arrive in time to enable you and our other officers in the Mediterranean to prevent the bad consequences which would inevitably arise from the return of so considerable a number of well-trained and seasoned troops to the theatre of war in Europe.

Believe me, dear Sir Sidney,

Yours very faithfully,

SPENCER.

SPENCER TO KEITH

13th December, 1799.

My dear Lord,—You will be sufficiently apprized of the nature of the circumstances which have produced the instructions now sent out to

you in the public orders which will be communicated to you by this conveyance, to make it unnecessary for me to enter into any detail. Whatever may be the pressure or the reasons at Constantinople for desiring to get rid of the French army from Egypt, at any rate it is very evident that the reflux of such a body of well-trained soldiers at this period into Europe would probably be productive of consequences which all the powers on the continent would much desire to avoid ; and in this view it appears material if possible to prevent their return. How far it may be practicable to do this with effect it is impossible to guess at present, unless we knew what steps had been taken in consequence of the correspondence which has passed between the French Generals and the Porte on this subject, and what means you may have at hand to act upon these instructions. I have, however, no doubt but that you will do all that can be done to carry into effect the two points of your orders. I am assured you will have still found Malta in the hands of the French, and I think from what I have heard, that it will certainly continue so, unless some land force is spared either from Minorca or Italy for the purpose of reducing it. I should think that with [the] present state of things there could be no fear for the citadel of Messina, and I believe our friend Colonel Graham would desire no better than to be employed with his two regiments to complete the reduction of the Island of Malta. The blockade of it during winter is really too trying a service for our ships.

Your very obedient humble servant,

SPENCER.

ELGIN TO NELSON

(Enclosed in Lord Keith's, 25th March, 1800.)

Constantinople. 15th January, 1800.

My dear Lord,—The communication with the coast of Egypt at this season of the year is not such as leaves me the possibility of furnishing you any interesting details from hence of the operations there. Still I wish to God I could have an hour's conversation with your Lordship on matters there. Your influence, from situation, character and profession, are requisite to correct errors, and to check some improper notions which are gaining much with some of our friends and co-operators. Sir Sidney Smith has, I am grieved to say, adopted a line of conduct of late, contrary to the wishes of our Government, to the spirit of our present system, and to the position in which he has already shown that he can be so very useful. He has assumed the character of Minister Plenipotentiary, grounded upon his having had that nomination to enable him to sign, with his brother, a treaty here last winter. He continues this title without confirmation, instructions or powers from home, and he has exerted it upon different occasions to exercise policy in Cyprus and elsewhere, a fact literally without precedent in diplomatic history. This has brought upon our arms the utmost ill will. It serves as an apology for backwardness in the Turks, and has given occasion to most unpleasant scenes in the Seraglio, where we have of necessity enemies to our alliance. Sir S. has next gone from the camp, in despite of every feeling of a Turk, to Jerusalem, shocked all their prejudices, and as his favoured catholics have on the occasion

been profuse in their presents to him, the Turks have made this display the pretext for oppressing these poor people by new contributions. Sir Sidney now attempts to take into his own hands the negotiation for evacuating Egypt begun by the Commanders of the Turkish and French armies, and proposes not only to have it on board of his own ship, away from the Grand Vizir, but also without any Turk of distinction as Plenipotentiary with him. If your Lordship takes the trouble of perusing the correspondence from the French camp, you will readily perceive that the French, if they think seriously of evacuating Egypt, are too happy to engage us as a principal party in their negotiation, first, in the hopes of securing on their side the high notions of Sir Sidney, which alone, independent of other considerations, is already a strong point gained towards their being reconducted safe to France; secondly, in the view of making this abandoning of Egypt an obligation to us, instead of one to the Turks, who have nothing to repay an obligation of this sort; and thirdly in the intention of tying us down in regard to the country they leave. On my arrival here I found this business opening, and a demand was made to me for passports, to secure the safe return of the French, who should agree with the Turks to abandon Egypt. I answered instantly that there being British officers acting on the spot, they were proper persons to grant the necessary passports. Since then I have again been called upon to interfere, but as it is highly discreditable to this Government that foreign powers should be parties in stipulations to be made with the French for evacuating its territory, I have uniformly recommended to the Turks that they should proceed

by themselves, the more so, as the spirit of my instructions pointed out this line, and the Turks have plans in view on this occasion, in which we cannot possibly take part, and which would ensure (what is so desirable) a continuation of the war on their side. I have sent my private Secretary to the Grand Vizir's army, and have by him put Sir S[idney] in possession of every thought I have on the subject. But this afternoon I have received the enclosed extract, written by Sir Sidney to the Turkish Government on the 15th December, which removes my hopes of conveying with efficacy my sentiments and my instructions to him. Profession of private feeling would be greatly misplaced in my correspondence with your Lordship, but I declare there exists not a man for whom I entertain a greater partiality than Sir S. Smith, nor whose conduct I would, and have, taken more conscientious care to support. It is only after this that I apply to your Lordship. I must add that General Koehler, whom I found here with a detachment of artillery and engineer officers sent out by Government, is now going to remain with the Grand Vizir, and consequently Sir S. will no longer have it exclusively in his power to act as representing Great Britain. From all these circumstances your Lordship will be able to direct the orders to be forwarded to him. He has already distinguished himself so eminently in his professional line, and has so fine a field before him, that he certainly requires nothing more than to have his duty pointed out to him.

Believe me ever, with the greatest veneration,

Your Lordship's most sincerely

and respectfully,

ELGIN.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

Tigre, off Cyprus. 28th February, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Being much pressed by Lord Elgin to get the French out of Egypt on any terms, ‘considering,’ as his Lordship expresses himself, ‘the state of European Politics’ and the evidence of that necessity being much greater in the Turkish camp than can be conceived by anybody who has not seen the multitude of barbarians within an inch of famine or insurrection, I exerted myself to the utmost and succeeded in bringing about what I considered to be a more desirable termination of this question; when I was thunderstruck on my return hither from El Arish to meet information which showed me that my superiors at a distance reasoned differently from those nearer the theatre of our operations, and consequently that what had been definitely settled, and in the most binding way possible, to prevent the effect of counter orders from Buonaparte, might be disapproved where I most hoped and wished to give satisfaction. Still, however, I had nothing certain to act upon but the obligation contracted in the Convention, and I still entertained a hope that when the necessity of the case was seen in the light that my early report on the ground of the regulation placed me, his Majesty’s Ministers would agree with me, that the French army was more to be feared in Egypt as a revolutionary colony than when blended in the mass of the population of France, and forming therein a very great addition to the discontented party. I have no doubt Buonaparte dreads their return, lest their disaffection to him should extend to the

rest of the army, and would sensibly feel the loss of Egypt, either as a means of realising his well-known scheme of influencing or annihilating the Ottoman Empire, or as an *objet de compensation*, in the general arrangement for peace, which he hopes to bring about on the basis of treaty. Knowing all this from the conversation of those who dreaded the obligation thereby imposed on them of staying in Egypt, and at the same time witnessing their decided repugnance to return to France in any way that should expose them to disgrace or punishment, which it was thought his influence with the Directory (then supposed to exist) would provoke, I could not but close with them on the only terms on which they could or would consent to give up this rich possession. I had no idea that the difficulty of the extent of this (to us) advantageous measure would arise on our side. I laid my accounts with a great deal about the loss of [*illegible*] which I thought would subside by the recollection that I was myself the greatest loser and that my reason must consequently have been urgent for making the sacrifice; but the orders of the 15th and 17th December communicated to me in one from Lord Keith dated the 11th January, but detained at Malta till the 5th February, forbidding me to do that which was already done on the 24th January, have made me quite miserable; for as an honest man I cannot but deprecate a breach of faith, and as a faithful well-meaning servant I dread the disapprobation of those I thought I was pleasing most completely, at the same time that I cannot conscientiously act in contradiction to myself or suppress what it is my duty to state, as the ground on which the arrangement as it stands was made, and ought

to be preserved. It is doubtful, now that they have a loop-hole to creep out of by Lord Keith's letter to them, whether they will not profit by it on their side to avoid Buonaparte's displeasure. If they were landed in France in a body subject to it, they must necessarily either throw themselves in the scale against him to avoid persecution, or he must submit to their influence and keep terms with them to prevent being overthrown. That influence I know would be salutary towards an ultimate arrangement, such as we would wish to see in France. Whether in France or in the Desert, I never can lose sight of the great end of all our labours, the oversetting their infernal system. I have worked at it with some success here. I undermined Buonaparte by my influence on the opinion of the army successfully, and I meant to preserve that line to the end ; but if I am now to be accused of the blackest perfidy and denied, as I necessarily must be, the means of justification, which would on the other hand be a breach of confidence towards you, there is an end of the influence I had acquired, and I am again reduced to shot and shell of which I have no great quantity to produce the desired and intended effect. At any rate I must beg of your Lordship as soon as I have punished Herod Gezzar, to call me to some other scene of action, the nearer Buonaparte's whiskers the better ; but there too I must beg latitude in my power of action, and be freely allowed to produce results, rather than be called to account at every step for reasoning and justification, which occupy the time in retrospect that would be better employed in progress. I beg too of your Lordship's friendship, not to be placed under the command of double dealers whether political

or military, but when the object is defined, and the land marked, that I may be allowed to put myself towards obtaining it, according to the means before me, and the obstacle which a near view can at once render distinguishable. I enclose copies of two letters which, or at least the reflection of which, may be longer reaching you by a more circuitous route.

Ever, your Lordship,
sincerely and faithfully,
W. S. SMITH.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

(Enclosed in 28th February, 1800.)

Tigre, Cyprus. 22nd February, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Your letter of the 5th of February has reached me with the preceding dispatches, of a nature, as your Lordship may well suppose, to embarrass me much. Considering the Convention of which you have by this time received an official communication, I did not of course consider it as to be acted upon, till formally ratified by both the French and the Turks; but that is now done, and the latter will not readily, as you may well conceive, give up Egypt again to them because we don't execute our part of the promises made; thus we shall, I am afraid, appear to have acted most perfidiously and our alliance may be shaken at a time when the question is not merely the loss of an ally, but the probability of that ally becoming either from fear of that same perfidy, or from dread of the enemy, the humble servant of King Buonaparte. His reign I know cannot be of long

duration, unless he puts a king upon the throne whom he can govern ; but I know one of his projects to be either to court the alliance of Turkey by all possible temptations, or to close with Russia in a plan of partition. This I have from those to whom he has detailed it. If we get these occupants off the territory the keystone of the main arch of this plan is taken out, and the whole falls to the ground ; if otherwise, I am sorry to say that Vizir is in a manner in Kléber's hands. The only thing I have been apprehensive of for some time has been lest he should find a good excuse for breaking an agreement he dared not to have entered into, if he had known that his rival had usurped the supreme powers, and consequently was enabled to punish as well as censure him on his arrival in France. I fear your letter of the 8th will be made use of by him as this excuse, and we shall then have the whole work to begin again, with less means of effecting it.

I have the honour to be, my dear Lord,
sincerely and faithfully,
W. S. SMITH.

MORNINGTON TO SIDNEY SMITH

(Enclosed in Sir Sidney Smith's, 29th September,
1800.)

Fort William. 26th April, 1800.

Sir,—I have had the honour to receive your Excellency's letter of the 1st February, 1800, enclosing a copy of the Convention concluded between the Grand Vizir and the Commissioners of the French Army for the evacuation of Egypt by the latter ; and I congratulate your Excellency

as well on the happy issue of this important negotiation, as on the distinguished part which your Excellency has borne in its conduct. Although our disposable force in India even after the conquest of Mysoor was not considerable, I had an anxious desire after the fall of the Sultan, to make every practicable exertion from this side to disturb the enemy in Egypt. I was however convinced, by a full consideration of the subject, that no effort which I could make for this purpose, on an extensive scale, [could] consequently produce any advantage adequate to the great expense and hazard of the enterprise, unless it should be conducted in perfect concord with your Excellency and the Turkish forces ; and on such a regular system of co-operation as (if even practicable under any circumstances) I perceived no possibility of arranging within a reasonable period of time. These considerations determined me to confine my efforts against the enemy for the present, to such desultory operations as might be undertaken by his Majesty's squadron under the command of Rear-Admiral Blankett, aided by military detachments from Bombay. The detailed measures which I adopted with this view in the beginning of February last, will probably have been communicated to your Excellency by the Rear-Admiral. If (notwithstanding the late Convention for the evacuation of Egypt by the French and contrary to every well-founded expectation as well as to every reasonable speculation which can be formed with respect to the general aspect of affairs in Egypt) the enemy should continue to maintain their possession of Egypt, your Excellency will find me cordially disposed to co-operate to the extent of my means, in any

measures which may be concerted for the forcible expulsion of the French army.

I have the satisfaction to inform your Excellency that the prosperity and tranquillity of the British Empire in India continue undisturbed. No Asiatic enemy or rival now exists to endanger our security and our naval superiority will probably preclude France from sending any armament into these seas.

I have the honour to be, Sir, with great respect,
Your Excellency's most obedient
and faithful servant,
MORNINGTON.

SPENCER TO SIDNEY SMITH

17th August, 1800.

Dear Sir,—I have now before me your letters of 28th February, 13th, 17th and 20th March, and 15th June. The delay and irregularity with which they have reached me, and the constant pressure of business under which I labour (especially during the session of Parliament), must be my excuse for not having more regularly or more speedily answered them. Now I have sat down for the purpose of acknowledging them, I feel it to be impossible to follow you in detail through the reasoning by which you explain the grounds and defend the principles of your proceedings. I shall satisfy myself by saying in general that your explanations and defence are so far completely satisfactory to my mind, as to prove that you have throughout acted in the manner which to you appeared the best, and though I think you to have been under an error with respect to the continuation of your power

as a Plenipotentiary (an error by the bye into which I am not surprised that you were led by the communications you received from Lord Elgin), and though I also differ considerably with you in the opinion you seem to have formed of the probable result of the return of Kléber's army into France, I cannot help allowing that you acted upon very strong grounds, and that upon the whole, if it had been possible that we could have been in complete possession of all those grounds for the purpose of forming our determination on the subject, the Convention of El Arish would have most probably have been carried into execution. In a matter of this sort, any argument to be drawn from the event, after that event is known, is in my opinion to be laid out of the question, otherwise I think it would now be impossible for anyone not to allow that the policy of that Convention was such as to recommend its ratification ; but even without that additional ground in favour of your opinions and proceedings, I fairly think, and so thinking, feel it due to you to say, that you have made out a good case. If the accounts we hear at present be well-founded, there is no disposition on the part of the French to renew the Convention, or anything like it. All the opinion I can venture to give on that subject now is, that as long as a French colony, whether armed or unarmed, whether Turks or Pagans, so that they be but French (it is no matter) still remain in Egypt, it will be absolutely necessary for us to watch them most attentively, and to have a naval force on both sides of that country for that purpose ; the mere circumstance of their possession of Egypt is nothing in comparison to the danger of their spreading in almost any direction, but especially

to the eastward, and while that is upon the cards, we cannot be at rest.

Believe me, dear Sir,

Your very faithful humble servant,

SPENCER.

SIDNEY SMITH TO KEITH

Tigre, off Alexandria.

29th September, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I enclose a private letter I have received from Lord Wellesley for your Lordship's information as to the probability of any co-operation with us on the Indian side of the Isthmus. I was too well aware of there being no great reason to expect any effectual assistance from that quarter by the tenor of the correspondence I have already received, and when your Lordship showed me that you had not a thousand men at your disposal to take Malta, I thought I could not do better than to ensure its falling by the natural effect of the evacuation of Egypt showing it to be a useless possession. I thus drew the Convention to a speedy conclusion, not only in compliance with instructions from his Majesty's Ambassador at the Porte, but from my conviction of the impossibility of effecting the expulsion of the enemy by any force the Turks could bring to act against them, and my knowledge of the difficulty of combining a general attack on both sides the Isthmus, although it was my duty to urge the attempting it, as it now is to state the impossibility of our recovering the country for our ally by any other means; the Turkish army alone so far from making alone any impression, being likely to drive the Mamelukes and natives to side with the French from the

necessity of self-defence and thereby give the Renegade Menou a Mahometan force at his disposal which may become formidable under European discipline. Your Lordship having been among the Moors is the best judge how far it might be practicable for these pretended proselytes to the Mahometan religion to operate on the minds of their votaries in India through the medium of the Mecca pilgrimage, I am persuaded they will endeavour so to do, from the attempts of this nature which are made not only on the common people's minds in this country, but of those of the most enlightened among the members of this Government, and certainly the Capitan Pasha may be reckoned of this description. His Excellency has been very exact in his obedience to the Grand Vizir's orders to communicate to me every overture made by the French to him, and I have no reason to doubt him when he assures me that the circumstances alluded to in the letters of which the enclosed are copies relate merely to the recovery of the Turkish ships which went into Alexandria during the Armistice and the release of certain persons among the Turkish prisoners in the hands of the French for whom his Excellency interests himself particularly.

Your Lordship's faithful and
obedient humble servant,
W. S. SMITH.

SIDNEY SMITH TO SPENCER

Tigre, off Alexandria.
30th September, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I cannot do better towards giving your Lordship the additional information

you will look for from me, besides the official folios sent to the west and the north, than to send you copies of my private letters to Lord Keith sent by the Mercury then ; while reading it you will have the satisfaction of knowing that his Lordship is *au fait* of all circumstances concerning this part of the station up to this day, and should he not be able to act upon it, you will know best how to give effect to the measures proposed and required for the recovery of Egypt, which I need not tell you [I] have much at heart in spite of all discouragement. I have neither time or eyesight to write more at this moment, though I could say much in justification of all I have been urged and obliged to do by those who now choose to join in the general cry of criticism. I have trusted all along to the liberality and justice of my superiors without making appeals to right and left which only authorise the intrusion of the curious and impertinent part of mankind. Should any doubt remain on your Lordship's mind on any particular part of my conduct, I pledge myself to produce satisfactory proofs to a mind like yours, and in this offer I beg you to be assured that self-justification is not so much my object as the apprehensions I have lest I should suffer any diminution of your friendship by active and malevolent misrepresentations.

Your kind letter of March last on Douglas's arrival was balm to my mind, at the time I received a knock-down blow in the folio dispatch. This is the latest letter I have from your Lordship.

Ever, my dear Lord,

Your faithful and sincere friend,

W. S. SMITH.

SPENCER TO SIDNEY SMITH

28th December, 1800.

Dear Sir Sidney,—I avail myself of the opportunity of a dispatch going out to Lord Keith to write a line to you in acknowledgement of your letters of 14th July and 30th September last. I trust that the operations which by the time this reaches you will probably be going on in your part of the world will prove successful, and I need not say how much of my confidence in their success rests on my knowledge that your assistance will be given to the prosecution of them to the utmost of your power.

Whenever Mr. Knight appears to be equal to serve, I shall have great pleasure in showing him all the attention to which your recommendation as well as his own services can justly entitle him.

Believe me, dear Sir Sidney,

Yours very faithfully,

SPENCER.

SECTION III

LORD KEITH

December 1799 to March 1801

KEITH TO SPENCER

Gibraltar Bay. 23rd December, 1799.

My Lord,—Upon coming here I had a conversation with the Governor respecting his giving a number of troops for the reduction of Malta. He absolutely declined, but at last promised some officers, a few artillery and ordnance of all sorts. From Sir James St. Clair I understand that General Fox is of the same way of thinking, and will not suffer a man to quit Minorca without an order for that purpose, although his garrison is very strong. I am therefore under very great apprehension that Malta will be lost, for I am convinced that nothing less than 6000 troops will reduce it, and if it is not to be pressed with vigour it were better to give it up ; the ships are worn to pieces during the winter season off that island. I intend to sail with the first west wind for Mahon and the coast of Genoa and fix a meeting with Lord Nelson ; as the communication is now open to Leghorn I may be honoured with your Lordship's commands in that channel.

I have the honour to be with greatest respect,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

faithful, humble servant,

KEITH.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Leghorn. 13th January, 1800.

My Lord,—I have just seen Mr. Wyndham and am happy to hear of the reduction of Coni, and there is a better prospect of a good understanding subsisting where it should. I find there are two thousand Russians gone towards Malta from that army which was in Piedmont, but that number will not do, and I am sure Minorca can spare two Regiments at least or 1800 men. I am at a loss respecting their Lordships' orders to watch Toulon, Admiral Duckworth being at one end of the station with five ships, Captain Troubridge off Malta, &c., leaves me only the *Queen Charlotte* and *Minotaur* to dispose of; and I cannot find that any ammunition ships have quitted Toulon. Captain Blackwood was heard to say he saw two sail of the line and two Venetian ships at anchor there, but he has left no letter or written information with the Minister or Consul. Mr. Wyndham had written at the instance of Lord Nelson respecting a fair co-operation at Genoa, but General Ott, who has succeeded Klenau, replies he has sent the letter to General Melas there. I go on shutting the port until I hear from that officer, and I should be glad to know what terms might be offered on our part, because there is a strong party for delivering up the city to the British should the French at any time leave the garrison as weak as it has been once or twice heretofore. Did the Emperor know the sentiments of the people or real state of this country, he would pursue very different measures. His officers are hated, oppressive and rapacious, and the better sort of

people panting for a change to anything but French. If there is anything like a chance of success at Malta, I shall be very loath to bring away the ships, it would so much carry the appearance of betraying the islanders. I shall therefore depend much on your Lordship's information of any considerable force coming this way that I may have time to collect my scattered ships. I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect,

Your Lordship's most obedient,
most obliged, faithful servant,
KEITH.

ELGIN TO NELSON

(Enclosed in Lord Keith's, 25th March, 1800.)

Constantinople. 15th January, 1800.

My dear Lord,—In addition to my other private letter of this day's date, I have still a weight upon me which your Lordship may, I think, be very effectual in removing. The Governments of Petersburg and Constantinople are very cordial. Nothing really in my judgment can behave better than the latter does, but it is not so with their agents, and I am mortified to see that Cadir Bey and the Turks under him are returned with innumerable complaints against the Russians. Can your Lordship soften this conduct in the latter? Can you convey to the Russians the spirit of our Union, and ensure more cordiality and fairness in the behaviour of individuals? It is a task worthy of your Lordship, and your superiority may enable you, I flatter myself, to effectuate it. I perceive a

strong alarm arising here from the expectation that Malta is to be put into the hands of the Russians. I respect and obey every decision taken at home, and certainly I should not repine at any advantage given to that nation; but in making this request I trust your Lordship will have in mind the effect which the possession of Malta must inevitably produce on this Government, and that if the cession is ultimately to be made to the Russians, our influence on the occasion may be exerted to calm the apprehensions of the Turks from it, both at present, and, as far as possible, in future. I venture to recommend these considerations to your Lordship, as being of the very highest political importance.

I have the honour to be with the most sincere respect, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most faithful

humble servant,

ELGIN.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Palermo. 9th February, 1800.

My Lord,—I came here on the 3rd and shall sail to-morrow with 1000 very bad Neapolitan troops on board for Malta. The Government here are extremely well inclined, but have not much in its power, particularly as the seat of government is so far removed from the capital, to which the King is by no means inclined to return. His Majesty, who dined on board yesterday (with the Queen and Royal family), asked when I intended to return. I replied when his Majesty intended returning to Naples I would endeavour to provide a suitable squadron, but

that Palermo lay out of our way, and all the ships must necessarily be employed in conjunction with the allies against the enemy whenever the campaign opened.

General O'Hara has sent me the copy of an order of Council respecting passes; I assure you, my Lord, that it is a subject of serious concern, and is a trap for raising money by the Secretary of Gibraltar; it is the more extraordinary as I was every day in General O'Hara's house at Gibraltar, yet he never once mentioned the subject, and I will venture to affirm that no vessel having a pass has ever been libelled in the court that was not in the act of carrying enemies' property which they do for a year, and if met have a couple of sheep on board for Gibraltar. I am convinced if the Council will order enquiry to be made it will at least modify if not recall an order so fraught with mischief. I do not write like one interested for although I have seen the evil to avoid disputes I have never detained one of them.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

humble servant,

KEITH.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Off Malta. 20th February, 1800.

My Lord,—I have a letter from General Fox in which he tells me a regiment is arrived at Mahon but no orders to send any to this place. At my request he has sent three officers of artillery, and a surgeon. I have had an opportunity to examine the fortifications and

find them as strong as can be imagined, yet if we had numbers enough to attempt to scale at three points it must succeed, their garrison is so weak, they have seven miles of wall to defend. Should the three corvettes return to France or be taken, perhaps Monsr. Vaubois may give us up the island. They have plenty of flour and water but nothing else, and the Maltese shoot them when they attempt to gather herbs under the walls.¹

General Graham made an attempt to dismast the Guilleaume Tell yesterday, but I have not heard that it has succeeded, my attention has so completely been called to blocking the harbour mouth that I have only been able to land once to look at the Cotonera line and our works.

I have the honour to be, with great regard,

Your Lordship's most obedient

humble servant,

KEITH.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Queen Charlotte, Leghorn Road.
7th March, 1800.

My Lord,—When I left Malta on the 27th of February its state was deplorable ; if not relieved before the 15th or 20th of this month by that

¹ The hopes that Malta would fall quickly were constantly disappointed. Ball had written as early as 3rd August that the French troops 'have not received the smallest supply of provisions these last four months, which has reduced them to the necessity of eating horse and mule flesh, of which they have very little left. The soldiers are sickly and much dissatisfied. They are determined to compel their General, Vaubois, to capitulate so soon as they see any force arrive here, and it is the opinion of some respectable men in Valetta . . . that at all events they will do it next month.'

time the season will admit of the ships anchoring before Valetta, one thousand good soldiers in addition to those now on the island, and the men I have prepared in the fleet to scale, would at any time take one of the posts, of course the rest must follow; but this thousand men are nowhere to be found. . . .

The expedition ¹ was composed of the 75 [*sic*] Venetian frigate, one corvette like the *Constance*, and two of 18 guns. It contained 1100 soldiers besides a General and staff, food, clothing, ammunition, medicine, tents and some ordnance, and had it arrived would have placed Malta out of the reach of a large army. The French seem to set a great value upon it, and I doubt not but they will try to throw in small vessels still. They had made it a principal feature in their offer to the Turks, I understand. . . .

Your Lordship's most obedient

humble servant,

KEITH.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Leghorn. 11th March, 1800.

My Lord,—By Colonel Tinderdale who comes from the Island of Minorca, I have the honour to inform you that the Princess Charlotte is this instant arrived here from Mahon, whose Captain informs me that Speedy had left that island for Malta with dispatches for me without knowing the contents. A merchant ship is also come who passed Gibraltar on the 3rd of March, and in the night counted twenty sail going into the

¹ In which the *Genereux* and other ships were taken.

Bay. One had lights, therefore he concluded it to be a flagship.

My public letter will tell your Lordship of the necessity I was under to block Marseilles without orders. We have been successful on the coast of Genoa, and if we are not disturbed from Brest, I have no doubt of success also at Malta, if they are not relieved very soon indeed. The roads and snow on the mountains prevents all movements on the part of the Austrians, and I fear they are in want of provisions in Piedmont. The French have made some advances towards Acqui on the west and to Fontabona on this side, which made our advanced posts fall back, but it is of little consequence to the general object.

I have the honour to be, with the greatest regard,

Your Lordship's most obedient,
most obliged, faithful servant,

KEITH.

SPENCER TO KEITH

29th March, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I take the opportunity of our messenger going overland to thank you for your letters which have reached me by Captain Maitland and Major Douglas, as well as those I had before received from you since your arrival in the Mediterranean to which I shall make more detailed answers by the vessel which we mean to send out to you with the duplicates of the orders carried by our messenger overland. The instructions ¹ sent in consequence of Lord Gren-

¹ These instructions are in Orders and Instructions, 28th March, 1800.

ville's communication are so full and explicit with respect to the subjects to which they relate that it is unnecessary for me to add anything to them, except by saying that I felt duly sensible of the difficulty of the situation in which you were placed by the conclusion of the capitulation with Kléber, and could not help very much approving the line you adopted on the occasion. I have only to add one word more on the subject of co-operation with the Austrians. I was extremely glad to learn the measures you had taken for establishing that co-operation, as nothing can be more perfectly consonant to the present views of Government here than that the most good understanding should prevail between you and the Austrian commanders. The views of the Court of Vienna have of late been to all appearance so much altered for the better that it is wished to assist and forward their execution as much as possible, and no circumstance can contribute more usefully to this object than as much co-operation from our naval force as can be given consistently with other objects. The fortunate interception of the *Genereux* and her convoy gave me the greatest satisfaction, and I hope that it will produce a conviction in M. Vaubois' mind that it is in vain for him to attempt holding out any longer. Under the apprehension however of the possibility of his still continuing to do so I have represented as strongly as I could to Mr. Dundas the expediency of directing the Lieut.-Governor of Minorca to furnish some more troops for this purpose. I trust that you will agree with me that after what has passed it is not very desirable that Sir Sidney should continue to command the squadron in the Levant, and the services of

an officer of his activity may be very usefully employed in other parts of the Mediterranean more under your own eye and direction. This arrangement, however, I leave where it ought to be left, entirely to your discretion, as also the question who would be proposed to act in the Levant with whatever squadron may be wanted there in case Sir Sidney is removed. If Lord Nelson would undertake it (which I think if there was any prospect of doing any brilliant service I think not improbable) he would be the properest person, and next to him I should undoubtedly mention Troubridge if it were not essential that the latter should return home as soon as convenient to act under Lord St. Vincent. The Culloden is in so bad a state that I conclude you will take the first opportunity of sending her home. . . .

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Your very faithful humble servant,

SPENCER.

SPENCER TO KEITH

30th March, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I am sorry to hear what you say of their ¹ unpopularity, but since the date of your letter I am led to hope that the views of that Government have changed in a favourable manner, and though they may at present think it absolutely necessary to keep a tight hand on countries which have so long been in a state of anarchy and confusion, they mean at last to act fairly and honourably by the King of Sardinia,

¹ The Austrians.

&c., who have undoubtedly hitherto had almost as much reason to dread and detest their deliverers, as they had their conquerors. I much approve of the hint you gave to the King of Naples about returning to his capital. I have long regretted, and have expressed my regret in pretty strong terms to the Marquis Circello, his Sicilian Majesty's Minister here, that he has not sooner seen this subject in a point of view more consistent with his own interests. I wish he may be induced to take this determination before it is too late, and it is not impossible but that the very proper measure your Lordship has adopted of removing the headquarters of the fleet to the other end of Sicily may tend to accelerate it.

I have no doubt but that there are great abuses in the granting of protections and letters of Marque; it is an old complaint and well deserving of a remedy, though it may perhaps not be very easy to find one which is effectual.

I lament the loss of the *Ville de Marseille*, but hope the material parts of the cargo will be saved. You may depend upon my using every possible exertion to send you reinforcements, should the combined fleets go your way; they are certainly in a state of immediate readiness for sailing from Brest by our latest accounts, but I am in hopes that Lord Bridport, who is very strong and off that port, will be able to catch sight of them, if they came out, and from the embarkation of troops on board I am rather tempted to suspect they mean another attempt on Ireland. I hope to be able to persuade Mr. Dundas of the necessity of authorising General Fox to assist you in the business of Malta; at all events, however, Sir Charles Stuart who is

immediately going overland will be fully instructed upon the subject. I wish we could spare you men and marines from hence at present, but I fear it will be impracticable, as the Channel fleet are all defective in complement, and we have great difficulty in procuring men enough to man the great number of troopships we have lately been fitting out. I hope you will find no difficulty in prevailing on the Austrian Generals to take off your French prisoners, as I know they wanted some to help their exchanges, and on that score had applied to us to allow our prisoners in England to be exchanged against the Russians taken last year in Switzerland. The subject of Corsica is a delicate one¹; you will receive an order upon it, the less we are concerned in it one way or other the better.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Your very faithful humble servant,
SPENCER.

KEITH TO SPENCER

H.M.S. Audacious, Vado.

8th April, 1800.

My Lord,—I am sure your Lordship will be pleased to hear of the success of the Austrians on the side of Montenotte and France, also that much of this success is owing to the King's fleet, and they all seem sensible of it. The French still hold the castle with 500 men in it, but little meat. Perhaps they will not give us the trouble to send guns against it. . . . Masséna must either fight the Austrians to disadvantage or shut himself up in Genoa where he must soon be taken for want of food. The bread is now

¹ See Introduction, p. 34.

24 sous per pound of 120 gs. and oil not to be had. . . .

I have the honour to be,
Your Lordship's most obedient,
most obliged, humble servant,
KEITH.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Off Genoa. 1st May, 1800.

My Lord,—I have sent a sort of land and sea journal to the Secretary; it is meant more as a matter of curiosity than public information, and I made it short to prevent intruding on the Board's time. It is fortunate the Austrians are enchanted with the services the ships yield there, which is so far good. Yesterday was a long and hard day. We fought by the French on Eastside. I saw the whole distinctly and observed *errors*, one great one; the Austrians let their troops into the houses of the village during a severe rain, they began to plunder, the French attacked, produced the greatest disorder, and would have taken the whole had it not been for the squadron, whose fire drove back the French to their entrenchments repeatedly, and gave the army time to withdraw, which they did in confusion and with loss. I congratulate your Lordship on the success of Admiral Duckworth, he represents the frigates as very fine ships and in good condition. I am sorry to add that fortune has failed the Austrians on the two important posts of Delmonte and Due Fratelli. The French have retaken them, which appears to me unaccountable with five battalions in them, who abandoned them on the attack from the French. I think we managed

ill and am in low spirits ; besides I do not like dividing the army so. General Melas is at least 40 miles to the westward, should either he or O'H. fail, or the French fleet oblige me to withdraw, their communication with the sea would be intercepted, and one of them, perhaps both, be obliged to fall back on Piedmont for sustenance. However they are better qualified to judge than I can possibly [be].

3rd May.—The Pigmy is this moment arrived, and I have been obliged to send her in shore to cover General O'H. who is attacked, and will reply when I have read the contents.

I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect,

Your Lordship's obliged and most faithful
humble servant,
KEITH.

SPENCER TO KEITH

9th May, 1800.

My dear Lord,—From the favourable accounts which have reached us of the operations in the neighbourhood of Genoa since the date of your last letter of the 8th of April, I am in hopes that before this reaches you that city will be in the hands of our allies, and I am happy to find that in the acquisition of so important an advantage they will have been so much indebted to the activity of your co-operation, which cannot but produce the most beneficial effect on the Convention which it is the political interest of this country to cultivate as much as possible at the present juncture. In referring back to a former letter from me, you will perceive that I was

inclined to think it might become advisable, after what has passed in the Levant relative to the capitulation of the French for the evacuation of Egypt, to direct the services of Sir Sidney Smith to some other quarter. I am now more confirmed in this opinion, and venture to recommend it to your Lordship to lose no time in bringing that officer to some station different from the one he now occupies, not so much because my own private opinion is changed on the subject of the measure, which I confess since I have seen the grounds on which it was adopted by Sir Sidney and with Colonel Douglas on the subject, I have been very much inclined to consider as much more necessary, than to some persons it appears to be ; but because I understand that a very serious and weighty complaint has been transmitted on the transaction from the Court of Petersburg whom it is our interest to endeavour as much as possible to conciliate, and who may probably look upon the removal of Sir Sidney Smith from the Levant seas as a measure adopted in deference to the sentiments manifested by that Imperial Court. For the above reasons I would recommend that Sir Sidney should be employed in such services as are not likely to be combined with any Russian operations, and the orders you will receive by this conveyance relative to co-operation with Sir R. Abercromby will most probably lead to various services of an active description in which Sir Sidney's peculiar talents may be very advantageously applied without risking any further offence to the Court of Russia on his account.

The very indifferent state of health in which Lord Nelson has for some time past appeared to be makes me very apprehensive that he may

look seriously to returning home before long. We have therefore left a discretionary power to your Lordship to permit him so to do, if he should for that cause think it necessary. I intimated in my last that we should probably take Admiral Duckworth from you. I have replaced him by Sir Richd. Bickerton, who will sail from Spithead in a day or two to place himself under your orders, and I hope you will find him a zealous and active officer. I shall not enter into the subject of the operations, which will be matter of communication between you and Sir Ralph when you meet, which it is essential you should do as soon as you can. They are pretty fully, though generally, detailed in his instructions which will be transmitted to you, and so much in their execution must depend on local and temporary circumstances that it would be difficult at such a distance both of place and time to give any useful opinion upon them.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 25th of March, and am much obliged to you for having anticipated my wishes about Captain Dixon, whom I believe to be a very deserving officer.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Your very faithful humble servant,

SPENCER.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Off Genoa. 10th May, 1800.

My Lord,—I have judged the dispatches this moment come to hand by the Theseus so important as to desire Mr. Jackson to send a careful person with them. In the meantime I

have ordered all vessels from the coast of Egypt to be detained, but not proceeded against. Of Corsica I also send accounts, but I shall fight off without giving offence to either party. I am happy to congratulate you on the important victory obtained by General Melas over the enemy. General O'H[ara] has had a subsequent note, saying that there are more than two thousand prisoners. The weather is bad and I am forced to put to sea, consequently unhappy lest something or other should get in (I am so surrounded by scoundrels) as it blows and rains from S.E. However I will do my best, and have the honour to be most sincerely and respectfully,

Your Lordship's humble servant,

KEITH.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Genoa. 20th May, 1800.

My Lord,—Col. Demay [?] of the King of Sardinia's Navy came here last night having left General Melas at Nice. Col. Demay and General Melas signify their obligation to Captain Morris whose excellent conduct saved two Piedmontese regiments who had made too precipitate an attack on the bridge of the Var. They must have laid down their arms had it not been for the well-timed interposition of the ships under Captain Morris.

The news of Berthier's advancing into Piedmont gives me concern, for although Genoa is ill off for any sort of food, yet your Lordship knows the uncertainty of all sea blockade, and the Austrians are not close enough to prevent

vegetables and green corn being carried in any day ; on the east side the enemy possesses 5 miles of country. . . .

I have no account of General Sir Charles Stuart. I am not sure but the best service he could perform at present would be to secure Nice and the Var, which would admit of Melas marching with an army equal to dispose of Berthier in the plains, where the Austrians have a powerful cavalry, in which case Genoa (unless supplied, which I shall endeavour to prevent) must fall very soon. . . .

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

most obliged, humble servant,

KEITH.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Genoa. 5th June, 1800.

My Lord,—I sincerely congratulate your Lordship on the evacuation of Genoa ; it is of great moment and I trust it will restore our affairs in this quarter, which of late were critical consequently of the incursion of the enemy on the side of Milan ; the blockade has been particularly creditable to the Navy. It is now nine weeks I am off this port, and only one vessel got in containing about 600 sacks of flour and some chestnuts, and whilst taking possession of the gate, the troops on the other side were raising the blockade. By a letter from Sir Thomas Troubridge I understand Lord Nelson has returned to Palermo with the *Alexander* and *Foudroyant*, &c., to escort the Queen of Naples to Leghorn,

but I wrote this day to order both ships to Malta to wait my arrival there; the French are straining every nerve to supply it. Yesterday we took a corvette loaded with wine and biscuits bound these three days from Toulon. I beg leave to present Captain Beaver to your Lordship's notice, he is a brave and zealous officer.

I have the honour to be most sincerely,

Your Lordship's most obedient,
most obliged, humble servant,

KEITH.

SPENCER TO KEITH

21st June, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I have to acknowledge your several letters of the 30th April, and of the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 10th and 16th of May. I heartily congratulate you on the success which has attended your operations during that busy and important period, as well as on the final reduction of Genoa, which event is now only known to us, through the medium of the French papers, and appears to have taken place at a very critical juncture. Whatever may be the ultimate fate of the Austrian campaign in Italy this year, we shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that by the activity and exertions of the squadron under your Lordship's orders, such essential co-operation has been afforded to our allies on the coasts of the Genoese as could alone have enabled them to gain that most material point, on which their future operations, and perhaps I might say their future safety, may eventually depend. You will receive by the

present conveyance directions which I hope you will find sufficiently explicit on the subject of Egypt. The great distance of that part of the scene of your operations makes it impossible to give more particular directions without again risking the same sort of misunderstanding which seems hitherto to have prevailed on that subject and has produced so much confusion and difficulty. I wish to leave it entirely to your discretion whether to continue Sir Sidney in the Levant or not, unless you should have already acted on the suggestion I before gave you on that point, and have brought him away; in case, however, he should still be employed in active operations there we have sent a supply of large shells for the use of [his] carronades, which may be put to some good purposes. I hope Sir R. Abercromby will have lost no time in furnishing sufficient means to reduce Malta. I have long lost my patience on that subject.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Yours very faithfully,

SPENCER.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Leghorn Roads. 3rd July, 1800.

My Lord,—I am honoured with your obliging letter of the 11th of May by the Sea Horse, and the list it contained, some of which list I have done my part towards your Lordship's views, and when occasion offers I shall have pleasure in attending to the others. Our misfortunes in Italy renders it impossible I should have given your Lordship any perfect idea of what may be

hereafter undertaken by the General ¹ and myself. The public dispatch will show with what vigour we have [been] attacked by the Neapolitan Minister and our joint answer to his request. I was [as] anxious as Sir Ralph [as] to undertaking any interior expedition, but I confess I felt inclined to consent that our disposal force should have gone to Gaeta or Naples, and to have landed if necessary to garrison the forts; the former is a good one, and both are open to the sea: but the difference of opinion was so trifling I thought it proper we should appear to be of one. It is said that Melas suffers the French to pass into the Papal State, and of course to Naples. Prince Belmonte pretends to have twelve thousand men on the frontier of Naples, and has again been with me to demand assistance, urging that Naples cannot make peace without England, that England is bound to support Naples, and even he pressed the relinquishing most of the blockade of Malta, the safety of Naples being more essential. To the latter request I gave a direct refusal, but with the General offered to meet him, Belmonte, and Castel Cicala. I hope I have done well; the times are really eventful, and changes are so frequent that it is difficult to please in every quarter.

4th.—I have this instant a letter from Lord Minto dated 23rd June. His Lordship seemed not to have heard of the Convention of the 15th, which seems odd; I discover Sir Ralph is extremely anxious to quit this country and get towards Portugal after having looked at Malta, but before the arrival of accounts from Vienna I shall not quit this, nor do I think it proper the troops should return to Mahon until then, as it

¹ Abercromby.

may furnish a pretence for Baron Thugut to say we had deserted him.

I have the honour to be with greatest respect,
Your Lordship's most sincerely
obliged and humble servant,
KEITH.

6th July.—The General has gone to Malta, the troops will sail this evening for Minorca, and I follow the General with the 48th Regiment on board, and leave the *Alexander* with Lord Nelson to attend the Queen of Naples.

DUNDAS TO SPENCER

27th September, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I return you the papers you sent to me. I wish you would give a general order to send me dispatches of that kind when they arrive, for they are necessarily connected with the orders which I must from time to time send to India. Those herewith returned are very interesting, and confirm me more and more that our actions in favour of the chimerical interests of our ally have led us to adopt a fatal measure with a view either to our own most essential national interests or with a view to the interest of another ally, which has been sacrificed to the imminent danger of some thousands of men being landed in France to act against Austria. My words had almost stuck in my throat when I defended that measure in the House of Commons, and I am sure I see not the possibility of defending it when the whole business comes to be known in its full extent.¹ All these however are con-

¹ The Convention of El Arish and its ratification.

siderations of no importance, compared with the reflections they must undergo, if the mischief is not to be remedied. I tremble for the delay our present resolution tends to, and I cannot help wishing you still to inform yourself with perfect accuracy, whether it is as impossible as you have stated to act at an earlier period in the Levant. If the chief ground of that being so is the passage which I have seen in the letter from Sir Sidney Smith of the 31st January last, it really does not afford ground to rest in a matter of such deep importance as the present question is. If the relief of Alexandria and the other seaports of Egypt can be effected by an expedition at this season, I hardly think anybody can be of a serious opinion it ought to be postponed. If only twelve in place of fifteen thousand men should be appropriated for Portugal, with that variation in our measure, I think fifteen may be sent to Alexandria. The letters from Blankett, my conversation with General Stuart, and above all the views I have formed in my own mind on the subject, all confirm me in the conviction I have of the importance of an armanent being immediately sent for the special purpose of attending to the affairs of the Red Sea ; and when I revolve the question again and again in my own mind, I am the more eager for obtaining the services of Popham for that purpose, for there is mixed with it so many considerations of a political nature, and where the naval officer will have to act with and conciliate the Sherif of Mecca, and others on both sides the Gulf, that I am persuaded no person can execute the business to satisfaction who does not go there fully in the knowledge (beyond what any official instructions can give) of the full extent of my

ideas upon it. I don't see how any question of interference of rank can occur. It is a special and appropriate service in which he can act under the instructions of the Secretary of State, and in the execution of which there is no prospect of prize or any other temptation to excite the jealousy of any naval person. If you investigate more minutely the question as to the practicability of going at an earlier season to the Levant, Mr. Pitt and I will meet you at as early a period as you please on Monday forenoon, or to-morrow forenoon if that would suit you better.

I am, my dear Lord,

Yours truly,

HENRY DUNDAS.

SPENCER TO DUNDAS

Roehampton. 28th September, 1800.

Dear Dundas,—I shall be in town to-morrow from eleven to four, and will meet you and Mr. Pitt at any time you please. I feel the strength of your argument, on the subject of Egypt, and I own I have felt the same kind of impression upon it ever since I became more fully acquainted with the real state of things there than I was when I concurred in the determination of []¹ to resist the French army's return.

[]¹ you mean to act with [],¹ I am persuaded that an inadequate force hastily patched up, and prematurely sent off in the midst of an unfavourable season, and without the advantage of concurring operations on the eastward coast of Egypt, will only expose us to disgrace and defeat, and by making the attainment

¹ Words missing in transcript and original letter not found.

of the main object of the expedition more difficult, confirm the enemy in his intention of preserving that important point, which, notwithstanding Mr. Otto, I think he will not be very ready to give up in negotiation, except perhaps for a price which we shall think extravagant. My reasons for thinking the present season unfavourable are not drawn from any one passage in any particular letter of Sir Sidney's, but from the general course of all the intelligence I have had an opportunity of procuring from that quarter, ever since our fleet was first up there. I recollect perfectly well that the blockade of Alexandria, which was maintained by Captain Miller in the *Theseus*, and afterwards by Captain Troubridge in the autumn of 1798, subsequent to the Battle of the Nile, is represented as extremely difficult, in consequence of the badness of the weather, and danger of the coast, and was at last obliged to be relinquished for that cause, after we had lost all the small vessels which we had there, and very near lost the vessels which were sent for the purpose of bombarding the town. Sir Sidney Smith, who sailed in the latter end of February in a single ship, did not reach Constantinople till just in time to sign the Treaty, which was signed on the 10th of January, and in one of his first letters, he dwells much on the impossibility of getting a Turkish squadron to go to the coast of Egypt till after the vernal equinox. In the subsequent autumn (of 1799) when General Kléber (after the departure of Buonaparte) wished very much to communicate with Sir Sidney Smith on the subject of evacuating Egypt, Sir Sidney was nearly six weeks endeavouring to get off Rosetta or Damietta (I forget which) for that purpose, though we know how desirous he was

to enter into negotiation with Kléber. This delay happened in the months of November and December, and considering the difference between a single man-of-war and a large fleet of transports and storeships, I do not think there would be much chance of our keeping a squadron in such a situation as to enable the army to besiege Alexandria, which, ever since the French have been in possession of it, has been strengthened by all the means of which they see well the use. And on this part of the subject I own I have great doubts how far we have any real prospect of being able to make ourselves masters of that place in any other supposition, but that of the enemy being in total want of ammunition. That may, however, be ascertained by enquiring from the officers who have last been there, of whom there are many now at home, or at least on the home station. I do not understand your statement of numbers unless you mean to take away the garrison of Gibraltar and Minorca, and if you should get these numbers, I am at a loss to know how they are to be conveyed. All the troopships we have (supposing them to continue for foreign service) do not amount to more than 20,000 men at the most, and when the Tagus has received the greater part of these, where can we look for a sufficient number of others for the Levant? What then, you will say, is to be done? I answer, that by the season proper for this expedition we shall know whether the danger to Portugal is real or not. If it be real, I think we should relieve ourselves from the difficult, and I might say the impossible task of defending her, by advising her to make as good a peace as she can; and we should then have as large a force as the circumstances of the war will allow

us to do, for the attack of Egypt, being already prepared to make a successful co-operating demonstration at least on the side of the Red Sea. For this latter purpose I agree with you that Popham is very well calculated, and on enquiry I find that the difficulty I apprehended about his standing does not exist, as all the captains but one who command ships which could be employed in that sea are his juniors ; his present ship, the Romney, is now refitting, which will take a few days, but when she is ready he shall be appointed to this service according to your desire.¹

Yours very sincerely,
SPENCER.

WINDHAM TO SPENCER

11th October, 1800.

My dear Lord, — . . . This acquisition of Malta, . . . is, I conclude you will think, a most happy incident in the affairs of Great Britain. I don't know anything, for a long while, that has so much delighted me, or that in every respect under which it can be viewed, promises to produce so many happy consequences. It is not a bad assistant to Dundas's projects upon Egypt, but I should myself be disposed to take it in the other way, and say, it would give additional recommendations to the plan of proceeding against Egypt upon a larger scale, and at a later period.

¹ Popham was appointed to the Romney, 50, in command of a small squadron which carried troops from the Cape of Good Hope and from India up the Red Sea, to co-operate with the army in Egypt. He also concluded a commercial treaty with the Arabs at Jedda ; was in India under the Marquis Wellesley, and after some further service in the Red Sea, returned to England in 1803.

I must confess I think the present plan a very hazardous one; it may succeed, and very speedily; that is to say, if the army of the enemy is either in a worse state than we have any good reason to believe it, or if the dissensions in it are such as to dispose it to listen to the first overtures for capitulation; but if the business draws at all into length, we shall, in my opinion, as in the case of the West Indies, lose our army, before we have gained our object, and then find ourselves in a worse situation, whether for war or negotiation, than if we had never made the attempt. It is curious to observe how those who will risk nothing upon some occasions are on others disposed to conclude that every chance, those even the most improbable, must all turn out in their favour. Those who would believe in no Royalist insurrection, would not suffer a doubt to be entertained of an insurrection in favour of the Stadtholder. Those who were full of distrust of Frenchmen, had the most perfect reliance on the zeal and energy of Dutchmen. We now take it for granted, that we are to have the co-operation and friendship of all the inhabitants of Egypt. It may be so, but I am sure I don't know it, nor they who count upon it, as an essential part of their plan.

I am glad to hear that from the report made of the business at Barcelona, there is good reason to conclude that the account of the Swede and false colours, &c., is all a fiction. If this is so, the Spaniards will have displayed a grandeur of misrepresentations exceeding almost that of their allies.

Farewell. I hope you and Lord Althorp have been doing great execution among the pheasants.
W. W.

SPENCER TO KEITH

23rd October, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letters as follows—18th and 31st August, 16th, two of the 20th, 22nd, two of the 25th, and 27th September, and two of the 7th of October. I must sincerely congratulate you on the very opportune surrender of Malta, and I agree with you in thinking that great merit attaches to Captain Ball, and those who have by so long a perseverance accomplished that important object, of which I confess I had begun to despair. I believe I ought also to congratulate you on escaping the danger you would have incurred had you effected a descent in the neighbourhood of Cadiz ; the season was far advanced, and the horrible distemper that raged there made the attempt too hazardous to be ventured ; to say nothing of the other reasons, which in such a deplorable state of the country might be urged against it. Egypt is now the great point of view in your command ; and I trust that notwithstanding some difficulties which necessarily must arise and be surmounted, that object will ultimately be satisfactorily attained. I am very sorry to hear that Captain Mundy is coming home, as I think you might have found the means of employing him in some other sloop besides the *Transfer*, as the *Diana* would have afforded an opening for some of the commanders under your orders. I cannot imagine how there can be any reason for a want of emulation among the officers whom you have the means of advancing, as it very seldom happens, except in cases where it is absolutely contrary to the rules of the service,

that an acting order given to an officer does not procure him a new commission at home.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Your very faithful humble servant,

SPENCER.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Gibraltar. 29th October, 1800.

My Lord,—I have had the honour of the Board's order and your Lordship's private letter dated 4th October for which I return my thanks. I shall be rejoiced at the arrival of an additional flag officer. Of late there has been far too much upon my hands, the foreign correspondence is excessive and the troops are everlastingly shifting their plans and ships, the troopships and transports continually wanting and complaining; many of them have really suffered much of late.

The service we are ordered on is indeed of great consequence, the season of the year is against it, and the difficulties attending landing and furnishing supplies of water in addition to all others, are weighty considerations; but it must have a fair trial. Nothing shall be wanting on my part; but in truth the military seem to think they are so perfectly master of our profession, it is not easy to give them satisfaction however much it has been my study.

I have the honour to be with the highest respect,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

most obliged, humble servant,

KEITH.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Mahon. 30th November, 1800.

My Lord,—Sir Ralph and myself have signed a petition to the King for a participation in effects taken at Malta. My agent Mr. Elphinstone will present it to your Lordship and the Navy will trust much to your Lordship for protection; their claims are well known to your Lordship and indeed they have some merit. When I last saw Sir Ralph he said as the numbers of the troops and seamen seemed so nearly equal he thought the best move would be to divide whatever might be granted, each service to share according to the general practice; at the same time he said he could not determine until he had seen General Pigot and those who were present at the capture. I claim for the ships at the moment of capture under the orders of Capt. Martin and employed on the service of blockade; some were not in sight of the island (of course) when it capitulated, such as one off Gozo, Pantilaria, Cape Passaro, and one off the Girgenti were indispensably requisite and in fact effected the blockade. I mention these circumstances because I have had it hinted the Army mean to resist letting any ship share which was not in sight at the signing of the articles, which would be hard on the Navy, considering how short a time the troops were on the island and that they never fired a gun at the works: but of this Ministers will judge when we advise the King.

I have the honour to be with the greatest respect,

Your Lordship's most obedient

humble servant,

KEITH.

DUNDAS TO SPENCER

Wimbledon. 24th December, 1800.

 $\frac{h}{9}$ P.M.

My dear Lord,—The accompanying letter, which explains its own subject, renders it unnecessary for me to trouble you more at length. A quick sailing vessel will at all events be necessary, whatever the result of your deliberation may be. I feel most severely all the untoward delays which have attended this very important and critical service and any prospect of further delay is most truly irksome, but I have nothing but a choice of difficulties and I must act according to the best of my judgment.

I remain, my dear Lord,

Yours truly,

HENRY DUNDAS.

(*Enclosure*)

DUNDAS TO ABERCROMBY

Wimbledon. 29th December, 1800.

Dear Sir Ralph,—I have seldom at any time since I was called upon to take a part in great public concerns felt more embarrassment and difficulty upon my mind than I do at the moment I am addressing this letter to you. As you have never either in your public or private correspondence hinted a syllable to me on the subject, I never paid any real attention to any vague rumours which may have reached me on the circumstance of there not existing a perfect and thorough understanding between you and Lord Keith. I do not desire to be understood as

meaning any such misunderstanding as had been productive of real bad humour between you, but that there did not exist on your part that confidence in him or that reliance on his judgment, skill, and exertions as promised such an execution of the naval part of the service in which you are conjunctly engaged, as to ensure that certainty of useful co-operation, so essential in all conjunct expeditions, and particularly in one where the difficulties were in themselves of a magnitude too great to be encumbered by others not absolutely necessary, or arising out of the service itself. It has however happened to me recently and accidentally to see one or two letters under your own hand, the terms of which tend too strongly to corroborate the impression I had taken; and a very recent conversation of a very confidential nature with Colonel Maitland, joined to what I formerly felt and knew, have upon the whole excited such doubts as to the probability of a failure in the event of a joint operation carried on by Lord Keith and you, as to render it impossible for me in justice to his Majesty and to the country, to allow matters to remain as they presumably are. The resolution I have come to is, to communicate this letter to Lord Spencer before I send it off, in order that he may seriously revolve the subject in his own head, and if he can make any new arrangement of the service, so as to allow the expedition to proceed as speedily as possible under other untoward circumstances, nothing remains for me but to direct you to act under the instructions you have already received.

If, on the other hand, Lord Spencer does not find himself in a situation to make any such new arrangement of the service as that the naval

part of it may *immediately* proceed under other command than that of Lord Keith, you are then to judge for yourself, on close consideration of all that has already passed, or which in your judgment is likely to pass, whether you choose to proceed immediately on the intended service under all the disadvantages you may suppose to attach to the command of the fleet as now existing, or whether you think it more eligible to remain at Malta till there is time for making a new arrangement of the naval command. But it is impossible for me under all I have seen and heard not to think it an essential duty on my part to put this option in your power.

An unfortunate indisposition for this week past has prevented [me] from seeing Lord Spencer these ten days past, but I send this letter to town this evening with directions to Mr. Huskisson to carry it to Lord Spencer, and to dispatch it to you immediately with such additional instructions as may arise out of the resolution Lord Spencer may be enabled to form upon the subject.

Although this letter in form and address bears the appearance of a *private* letter, I am well aware you must consider it in a very different view, and that you must be at liberty to reserve it and use it as the document by which your conduct is to be regulated according to the circumstances I have detailed. As such I shall take the liberty of submitting it immediately to his Majesty's perusal.

I remain, dear Sir Ralph,

Yours truly,

HENRY DUNDAS.

SPENCER TO DUNDAS

25th December, 1800.

Dear Dundas,—I was a good [deal] surprised at the contents of the letter to Sir R. Abercromby which I received from you this morning ; not having had any communication previous to it either from you or anyone else which appeared to me to go the length of warranting such a measure, differing so essentially both in its extent and object from the act of intimation which some time since you and I had agreed to make to both the parties in question. If Mr. Pitt had been in town to-day, I should have been able on talking over the subject with him to come to some more decided opinion upon it than I confess I now feel competent to do ; the question appears to be of much difficulty, for I do assure you that if it be requisite to supersede Lord Keith from his command in the Mediterranean I do not know under our present circumstances to whom I can with equal satisfaction to my own mind entrust it ; and I most certainly have not observed anything, either in his public or private correspondence as far as it has come under my observation, which proves him to be in any degree less fit for the charge than he appeared to me to be when it was entrusted to him. Unless therefore I shall be convinced that such is the case I do not very well see how I can with any degree of propriety avoid supporting him against insinuations which may for aught I know proceed from the prejudice or ill-humour of the moment, both of which may naturally exist after a failure in a continued operation.

Mr. Pitt will be in town to-morrow when I

shall see him, and shall afterwards communicate with you either in writing or if it shall appear advisable by calling on you at Wimbledon, for I would not on any account be the occasion of bringing you to town as I am sorry to find you are not well.

Yours very faithfully,

SPENCER.

SPENCER TO KEITH

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

Admiralty. 27th December, 1800.

My dear Lord,—On a full reconsideration of the present circumstances attending the operations of the fleet under your command, and of all the points on which your attention may eventually be required in the different parts of the Mediterranean, it has appeared to me to be a matter of considerable doubt whether your proceeding with the convoy to its destination or your remaining in the western part of the Mediterranean either at some central position or varying your station as the several objects of service may require will be best calculated for forwarding the interests of the service in general. On this account I have been led so far to alter the opinion expressed to you in my letter of the 4th October last, as to judge it right to give you the latitude which you will find contained in the order from the Board by the present conveyance.

The probability of the French making such a progress towards the south of Italy as to require effectual co-operation as far as it can be given

on those coasts, the danger to which in such a case the Island of Sicily will be exposed, the preservation of which Island appears highly essential to our new acquisition at Malta, the defence of Malta itself and of Minorca, with the conduct of any communications which may be necessary or practicable with the Austrian community in Italy, are all points of such weight and importance in my view of the subject, and which appear so much to require the presence of an officer in whom the chief authority is vested, that they have naturally led to this alteration in my opinion, and induce me to suggest the expediency of your entrusting to Sir Richard Bickerton the co-operation with the army on the coast of Egypt rather than proceeding thither yourself.

I am the rather inclined to offering this suggestion to your consideration from a circumstance which has reached me lately (but in so vague a manner that I trust it is without foundation) which if it should in any degree exist must not a little affect your decision upon this question ; this is a rumour that you and Sir Ralph Abercromby are not upon those terms of cordiality and good understanding which are essential to the conducting with energy and effect any conjunct operation.

This is a subject upon which I cannot enter more particularly not having any other ground to go upon than that of mere report, except observing that at the time the last advices came away, you were on board of different ships ; a circumstance which in all the conjunct expeditions to which I have been witness since I have been at the Admiralty never has before occurred.

I have that confidence in your good sense

and judgment that I feel I need not do more than merely call your attention to this point, in order to convince you how much must depend upon it, and having so done I am well contented to leave it to your decision at the time this reaches you whether there is a sufficient foundation for the vague rumour which has reached this country to form an inducement in addition to all the others to which I have adverted in the former part of my letter for your deciding on making a detachment rather than accompanying the army in person.

You will recollect, I know, that on the success of the enterprise you are engaged in depend not only all the great public interests and advantages which form the immediate object of it, but the dearest and most important interests of those who conduct it, &c., *i.e.* whose future estimation and character if the expedition should unfortunately fail, and there should appear the smallest ground for supposing that the failure was owing to a misunderstanding between them, must infallibly be ruined for ever. Such misunderstandings, wherever the more or the less of the fault may lie, never can happen without blame being imputed to both sides; and the idea of any possibility that such could exist in your case has induced me to go thus far upon the subject, in full confidence that if, as I hope and trust, my apprehensions are unfounded, you will attribute it to my extreme anxiety both on public and private grounds, for the successful event of your operations.

It is not impossible (unless the unfortunate delays which have attended the supplies from England should have retarded your movements) that this letter and the order which it accompanies

may only reach you after you have proceeded towards the ultimate object of your destination ; in which case though you still will be at liberty to adopt either of the alternatives left to your option I conceive there will be less probability of your availing yourself of that liberty, and I shall remain as sanguine as ever in my expectation that final success will attend on the cordially united endeavours of both services which alone can ensure it.

[*Copy, unsigned.*]

DUNDAS TO SPENCER

[27th December.] Saturday even.

My dear Lord,—I wrote my private letters the moment I came to the country, and your Lordship is before this time in possession of them. Nothing can be more to my satisfaction than your private letter. There is no harm at the moment, but it will be impossible for Lord Keith not to suppose that we had concealed some of the topics we urge.

H. D.

NELSON TO SPENCER

San Josef.¹ 29th January, 1801.

My dear Lord,—It is this moment reported very generally believed that 14 sail of the line are got out of Brest.² If this proves true, consider me as ready and wishing to follow them.

¹ Nelson, in the San Josef, was at Plymouth on this date : he had just joined St. Vincent's command, prior to hoisting his flag in the St. George for the expedition to the Baltic.

² This refers to Ganteaume's squadron. Calder was sent in pursuit.

If they are bound to Egypt, by no means improbable if that force actually sailed, I should hope they might be overtaken by a good sailing squadron. 8 or 10 sail of the line with San Josef at their head would form a junction with Sir John Warren and it would be my pride and pleasure to fly to the relief of Lord Keith and to save the squadron and army, off Cadiz or at Gibraltar. We should be sure of knowing if they have passed the Straits. If they are gone either to the East or West Indies or not unlikely to save the Brazils, I am equally ready to follow them and I should hope for the blessing of the Almighty on my endeavours.

Ever, my dear Lord,

[*Signature cut off.*]

Draft of reply

Admiralty. 31st January, 1801.

My dear Lord,—Your offer contained in your letter of 29th December [*sic*] does you great credit, but in the present state of our force and of our information it cannot be accepted; if anything is sailed from Brest, Sir H. Harvey will already have acted upon the instructions to him, and in that case our detaching from hence would be unnecessary.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Yours very faithfully,

SPENCER.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Marmarice. 12th February, 1801.

My Lord,—I should feel very ungrateful if I failed to return my most sincere thanks for the

most kind letter you did me the honour to write 27th December, on a subject which gives me real concern. Your Lordship's letter and that from Mr. Dundas brought me the first notice of any such report. I instantly went to the General. He told me he had heard such a rumour and had written to friends of his and mine in England desiring it might be contradicted which I should most certainly have done if ever such a rumour had reached me.

Your Lordship knows that off Cadiz a misconception of my having represented the Bay of Rota as a safe anchorage took place, which was referred to the plans I gave and the public examination of the pilots ; and there it ended. Since that period I have constantly been with the General or he with me on business and in private life, and on my part I am unconscious of any misunderstanding and can with safety declare that nothing of the sort has in any degree interrupted the service. Whatever may be the issue of the expedition I have given my whole mind to it and to anticipate the wants of the army as far as was possible.

The reasons we are in different ships are as follows, and which the General assured me yesterday induced him to prefer being in another. I was in a ship of two decks, and in which I had reason to think I should not have so long remained, and which the public necessity only occasioned : the pressure of business attending so large [a] fleet occasioned me to call more assistants near me. I had, like some others, part of a regiment and sixteen officers in the ship. Sir Ralph Abercromby had a numerous staff, men of high rank to be provided for, so that him and me were reduced to one small cabin to transact all the

duties of the fleet and army, and sleep in, which he found impossible, particularly on so long a voyage. Besides, the General had to go directly to Malta to regulate that island, whilst I was called to Minorca to re-establish a ruinous fleet ; but part of his family continues in my ship, and one side of the only cabin I have has been constantly kept for when we shall draw near the point of our destination. At Malta I was taken with a fever which confined me to bed until after I had arrived at this Bay.

When I had the honour to receive your Lordship's obliging letter and one from Mr. Dundas I carried both and the Board's instruction to the General, requesting he would fairly tell me if he rather wished Sir Richard Bickerton to act with him, in which case I would go away in a frigate that his force might not be diminished, which he declined. He read Mr. Dundas's letter to him on the subject and agreed with me it was the work of some mischievous person, that my experience and presence was necessary to the expedition ; all of which I suppose he will write Mr. Dundas and therefore say no more.

I know the consequence of the undertaking to the nation and feel it ; I am under obligation to those who have directed it and am not apt to forget them. As an honest officer I am called to exert every nerve in the service of my country and I rest confident that the General will do me the justice to admit that no delay has taken place in the naval line nor has any one requisition ever been refused by me which was within the compass of my person ; and I have no reason to doubt the General's mind is not as deeply engaged on the object as mine.

Having thus endeavoured to explain myself

to your Lordship I have one request more to make, which is, not to have the smallest sign of delicacy in removing me from the command should your Lordship or any of the King's Ministers imagine the service suffers from my remaining ; so long as I am considered useful it may be a duty to continue and a moment beyond would be a crime.

I cannot finish this without rendering my acknowledgements for the candid way in which your Lordship has treated this business and of assuring you with how much esteem I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's most obedient
humble servant,
KEITH.

KEITH TO SPENCER

Aboukir Bay.
11th March, 1801.

My Lord,—I was honoured by your letter of 28th October by the Pique only a few days back and am much obliged by the favourable expressions it contains respecting Malta and Capt. Ball. Of Cadiz I have said enough ; the disease we must have caught ; had I been sure *it* had not been exaggerated I should not have consented to go there at all ; the other difficulties were well known to me and I pointed [them] out, yet I judged it better to [go] off the place that the General might see with his proper eyes than for me to take the whole responsibility of relinquishing an expedition which depended on both services. To the last moment I offered to take my full share of risk and responsibility, yet I am

glad it was given up because I found afterwards the General thought exactly as I did.

The present is a most trying situation and has answered hitherto beyond my most sanguine expectation, and whatever people may say in England I believe the General is sensible of the advantages he has derived from the fleet and from my remaining. It is surely no desirable situation to be performing the duties of an agent of transports when the enemy have a squadron in the sea ; and yet, strange to say, I cannot be absent an hour without things getting into disorder. It is a young army and has little resource, but its gallant behaviour on the eighth must have impressed the French. Captain Cochrane had great merit, so had Sir Sidney Smith and Capt. Stewart. The covering vessels all ran aground close to the beach.

I was sorry Capt. Mundy went home : I left it to himself to decide. At that time I had no intention to employ *La Diane* before your Lordship had determined who was to command. Captains Beaver and Maitland were both mentioned to me for the first post vacancy ; inclined to both, I did not like to decide. I afterwards found it absolutely necessary to make new arrangements and get men about me of exertion and capacity.

I feel much indebted by your Lordship's attention to my wishes respecting my nephew, Capt. Elphinstone of the *Robust*. But I fear his sloop is condemned at Amboyna.

I am under great anxiety to learn the real force of the enemy and what reinforcement may have been sent to Sir John Warren.

The General has again required the marines to be landed and with reluctance I comply. But I am convinced were I to refuse or withdraw

a man the troops would re-embark and charge the failure to me, and so it will be if the enemy throw troops into Alexandria. There are now six thousand men from the ships employed night and day in the service of the army, and they undergo great fatigue. Some of the ships are seven miles from the shore ; the weather has been uncommonly bad. If we are successful it has been owing to our nation ; we have not a Turkish flag in the Bay and have been disappointed in every request we made and every promise made by that Government.

I have the honour to be with the greatest respect,

Your Lordship's most obliged,
most faithful, humble servant,

KEITH.

PART III

THE INDIAN WATERS, THE
RED SEA AND CAPE OF
GOOD HOPE

1797 TO 1801

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE letters in this section relate to the action taken in the expectation that the Toulon armament was destined for Egypt and India—a belief more widely entertained than is usually supposed—and the consequent movements made in the Asiatic seas. To the men of the day, particularly those in India, the situation appeared critical; and although the scale of all these operations was small they deserve more study from the naval point of view than they have received. Dislike as one may the dissipation of force such operations involve, the letters show the numerous considerations that call them into being, and the far-reaching influence of even small naval forces in the outer parts of the world.

The belief that India was the objective in 1798 was not unreasonable. So early as September 1797 Bonaparte had expressed the view that if France should be obliged to give up the Cape of Good Hope at the Peace she should take Egypt, and the aims of the expedition thither, as set out in the Secret Degree of 12th April, 1798, were to seize Egypt, chase the English from their foreign possessions, destroy their trading stations in the Red Sea and obtain complete possession of those waters for France. On 30th January, 1798, the Governor of Mauritius issued a Proclamation stating that Tippoo Sahib, our inveterate enemy, wished to form an alliance with France, that he would bear the cost of the troops and furnish the supplies, and would only defer declaring war until the French should be ready to come to his assistance. News of this Proclamation reached the Cape of Good Hope in March 1798, Calcutta on 26th April, and London in May or June 1798. The letters show us

Christian at the Cape, Blankett and Mitchell at home, writing to Spencer, giving him their opinion that the Toulon armament had an Indian objective; and the Secret Committee of the East India Company was writing at the same time—18th June—to the Governor-General, warning him that the enemy, who had got away from Toulon on 19th May, was possibly destined for India either by the way of the Red Sea or Basra.¹

The Proclamation from Mauritius appears to have come opportunely to hand, and to have 'gone a good way to determine,' in Spencer's words of 17th June, the destination of Bonaparte's army.² Action to deal with the situation that might arise if the belief were correct was taken at once. In order to intercept whatever France might send, a small force of two ships and a sloop, under one of Spencer's correspondents, Captain John Blankett, was detached for duty in the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Persian Gulf, to intercept any armament that might come by either route.

Prompt action was also to be taken on land. Mornington was told that if Tippoo proved to be acting as the Proclamation represented, it would be better to attack him at once. The justification for this was amply proved by Tippoo's later behaviour, and by a letter from the Directory of 4th November, telling Bonaparte that a Treaty was about to be signed which would give him the choice of three courses of action: secure himself in Egypt, go to India—provided he could get there—where he would find plenty of people to help him in overthrowing the British, or march on Constantinople.

The Governor-General wished to act immediately. He ordered a concentration of troops on the Coromandel and Malabar coasts with which the squadron under

¹ Dispatches of the Marquis Wellesley.

² The date is an interesting one. Two days earlier (15th June) Nelson had written to Spencer: 'If they pass Italy I shall believe they are going on their scheme of possessing Alexandria and getting troops to India, a plan concerted with Tippoo Sahib by no means so difficult as might at first sight be imagined.' How, one may ask, had Nelson been made aware of Tippoo's correspondence with the French at that date?

Admiral Rainier was to co-operate against the Sultan ;¹ but the army was neither ready nor fit, and the plan had to wait.

The news of the Battle of the Nile, which reached Mornington on 31st October, did not dispel the fears for India. Tippoo Sahib still remained hostile, obviously trying to gain time, and a little French help, if it could arrive, might render the situation precarious. The intended general policy was outlined in a private letter of 13th December, 1798, in the following terms : ' The great object of all our efforts is to prevent the success of the joint designs of Tippoo Sultaun and the French. On the one hand we must endeavour to interrupt all communication by sea between Tippoo Sultaun and the French, and on the other hand it is our equally urgent duty to strengthen our army in the Carnatic to the utmost degree possible in order to provide against all contingencies.' With these objects Rainier, whose squadron was small and necessarily had also the insistent demands of trade protection to meet, was reinforced by two East India ships—the Earl Howe, Captain Burrowes, and Princess Charlotte, Captain Prescott ; a blockade of Tippoo's ports was ordered and military measures were pressed forward. The campaign began in February 1799. Seringapatam fell in May. Rainier, in his letter of the 10th December, lays stress on the effects of the presence of the squadron, intimating that it kept other discontented princes from joining Tippoo, and so affording an indirect, but not unimportant, contribution towards the success of the campaign. In urging the retention of the ships of force upon the station he calls attention to ' the great impression their [the line of battle ships'] appearance makes on all the native chiefs and their subjects in general.'

So soon as security from the internal danger in Mysore was obtained, Mornington turned his thoughts to offensive measures beyond the shores of India. On 16th May, he suggested whether it might not be advisable, if the French established themselves in India, to consider the

¹ Lord Mornington's Memorandum of 12th August, 1798

dispatch of the efficient army now available to co-operate by way of the Red Sea with any attempt against the French in Egypt that might be made from the direction of the Mediterranean.¹ This idea developed into Baird's expedition.

Although these and other proposals for conjunct operations were calling for naval co-operation, the Admiral had to weigh and provide for them consistently with the attention due to the protection of trade in those seas, which, as he said (27th December, 1800), 'now swarm with the enemy's privateers.' The China trade was a source of anxiety, and losses of ships were taking place even off the Sand Heads. The *Emden* was by no means the first ship that has cut into the trade in the Indian seas, and the cause that contributed mainly to her success and immunity is of an age-long nature—lack of an adequate squadron of the lesser type of vessel. Just as the admirals in the West Indies were representing their needs for more frigates and sloops, so was Rainier; and like other commanders in similar situations, he cast his eye upon their base, Mauritius. He points out the reluctance of the merchants to sail in convoy, and the disadvantages of arming the merchant ships whose native crews were not of a fighting temperament; so that an armed ship became merely a ready-made addition to the force of enemy privateers.

While this was taking place in India and the Asiatic seas as a result of Bonaparte's presence in Egypt, Blankett was on his way to the Red Sea. Leaving St. Helens on 9th July, 1798, with the *Leopard*, *Daedalus* and *Orestes*, he reached the Cape, but did not call, on 1st October. His squadron, scattered in an Agulhas gale, collected again in its rendezvous at Johanna on 31st October, where it had the luck to capture one of the ubiquitous French privateers. Sailing again on 11th November Blankett made for Brava, and in that remote spot,

¹ Lord Elgin also suggested it later to Mornington in a letter of 16th November, 1799, in which he asked whether a 'respectable diversion' could not be made from the Red Sea by troops from India and the squadron under Blankett.

on 10th December, he learned of Bonaparte's landing in Egypt and the capture of Cairo. Delayed by contrary winds and currents and hampered by want of supplies, he only reached Mocha on 17th April. There we see him taking in review what later generations of Englishmen have similarly had to consider—the attitude and influence of 'the Sheriff of Mecca, the Imaum of Muscat, the Bashaw of Bagdad and the other smaller princes,' and how to engage their co-operation against the enemy in Egypt. This co-operation was not negligible. Comparatively small as the numbers appear, the tribesmen proved a thorn in the side of the French army in Upper Egypt. Some 2000 Arabs of the Yemen, coming by sea from Yanbo and Jeddah, proved by no means the least of the difficulties with which Desaix had to deal. 'In all the meetings we have had with them,' wrote Captain Garbe in his Journal,¹ 'they have shown both courage and intrepidity, which has surprised us the more as for a long time we have never found any signs of aught but cowardice and fear among the Arabs and Mamelukes.'

Thus Kosseir, as the principal landing-place of these auxiliaries from the opposite side of the Red Sea, became a strategic place of such importance that Desaix detached a column from his already exiguous force to capture and hold it after the battle of Bir Amber on 1st April, 1799. To hold it meant to cut the Meccan communications, and this, in the French General's eyes, was essential. And it would do more, for it would open the way towards bringing influence to bear upon the Red Sea tribes. The possession of Kosseir seemed in fact to Desaix, the best, if not the only means of assuring French domination in Upper Egypt.²

That influence could however be counteracted from the sea. The effects of a naval bombardment of Suez, materially quite unimportant as it was, reached further than the mud walls of the little fort. On 9th May, 1799, Desaix, hearing of it, notes that it has resulted in a gathering of Arabs in the neighbourhood, and shows

¹ De la Jonquière, *Expédition d'Égypte*, vol. iii. p. 500.

² *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 651.

that the presence of the British ships is unwelcome. 'You must know, General,' he writes, 'that the English in the Red Sea may cause us much anxiety, and we must redouble our efforts to take that place [Kosseir]. You know well that, if they are masters of the Red Sea, the English are able to vomit from thence thousands of these fanatical Meccans, whom it will be so difficult to subdue. In the name of the safety of the Republic save us these anxieties by sending us the necessary troops . . . *au nom du ciel, occupez Kosseir.*' Exaggerated fears perhaps, but of a nature easy to understand. Belliard saw the situation in the same light. 'I should bitterly regret it,' he wrote, 'if the English should ever come there from India,' nor must they be allowed to throw Arabs into the country. A tranquil Upper Egypt, which would permit a reduction of the army there, an avoidance of dissipation of strength, and a concentration in the north, was what the French needed; but it was what they could not get while the English, in command of the Red Sea, could exercise influence over the peoples on the other side, and at any moment might make a descent with regular troops from India.

To get promises of help from the Arabs was, as Blankett found, one thing; but to secure, and still more to retain, the help itself was quite another. He describes them as the 'most artful and deceitful scoundrels in the world,' whose Ruler acted on the belief that political lying is the whole art of Government, and who preferred the advantage of the present moment to his future interest. But Blankett had always the power to coerce which sea power confers, whether in a small area like the Red Sea or the greater areas like the Atlantic, North Sea or Mediterranean. For one thing he could stop their commerce; and this, in a part where sea carriage is essential, was a means of keeping them to their engagements. For another, England was in alliance with Turkey, and could, by means of the sea, enable Turkish troops more easily to operate in the territories of the tribesmen. It was upon this mission that Blankett was principally engaged during his service in the Red Sea.

On the other side of the Indian Ocean Admiral Rainier had wider matters to consider. In his capacity as commander-in-chief he was the accepted naval adviser to the Governor-General, and was consulted in all the many and various special problems that came up for discussion—co-operation with the army in the Mysore campaign, blockade and interception of possible French reinforcements, proposals for expeditions to Manilla, to Batavia and Mauritius, and preparations for the later expedition under Baird. Mauritius, as in earlier wars, was a point upon which the eyes of seamen and the East India Company naturally were fixed.¹ In this war an expedition against it had been suggested in 1794, but it was not carried out. Rainier suggested that the Cape Squadron should keep a force cruising off the islands (10th December, 1799). Mornington had already (24th October, 1800) written to Curtis at the Cape on the subject, hoping that he would keep a squadron cruising off the French islands, and, in addition, off the Spanish ports in South America, to intercept any French forces coming to India, and to reinforce either Blankett or Rainier. Mornington referred also to the possibility of French troops being thrown into Mauritius, which would constitute a danger to India, and told Curtis that it was his intention eventually to take the island—probably in January or May 1801—in which case he would require Curtis to furnish the blockading force. As surprise would be essential he did not intend sending the expedition from the Cape, but from India, and Rainier, Curtis and Arthur Wellesley were the only persons to whom he had confided his secret. Curtis, however, represented that his force was inadequate to carry out a blockade, and further pointed out certain essential elements in the problem (19th December, 1800), among others warning Spencer against the error, made with such tragic frequency in spite of innumerable experiences, of expecting any useful assistance from local malcontents. ‘I think that in many, in very many, instances during

¹ The expedition under Boscawen in 1747 was suggested by the Secret Committee of the East India Company.

the war we have seen the fallacy of such expectations.' If the operation was to be undertaken, it must be of sufficient strength in itself to overcome resistance. Rainier, though he had suggested the blockade by the Cape squadron, definitely refused to join in an expedition. 'His Excellency the Governor-General soundly offers to my concurrence the plan of an expedition against the Isle of France. . . . I refused the co-operation of his Majesty's squadron, as being decidedly of opinion that his Majesty's command officially signified to his Excellency and the officers commanding his land and sea forces were indispensably required to authorise an undertaking of that importance,' and quoted three cases during his own command in justification. The reasoning does not ring very true. Fortunately it was not the custom of commanders abroad to await instructions for such operations. Harvey and Abercromby, for instance, waited for none to take Trinidad.

The proposal to capture Batavia was alternately raised and dropped. It was first suggested early in 1800, and a partial blockade was put in force; but the need for defence in India, in consequence of the unfavourable turn of affairs in Europe, made it necessary to keep the troops at home. The blockade was nevertheless maintained. In October the news that Austria had made peace with France was received. The Governor-General¹ interpreted with remarkable accuracy the change this would bring about in the strategy of the Home Government. Writing to the Admiral (22nd October, 1800) he said that France would now probably make a vigorous attempt to reinforce her army in Egypt—as she did, to some extent, by the dispatch of Ganteaume's squadron—and this might be accompanied by an attack on India. The British force at Minorca, assembled there, as he

¹ Possibly on the suggestion of Sidney Smith, who said that he had written to Mornington on the matter, 'in order to enable him to be in readiness to act, in case my similar and simultaneous representation to the Government in London should cause it to order a body of troops to be sent from India to the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea' (Barrow, *Life of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*, vol. ii. p. 39).

supposed, for operations on the south coast of France, would not, in the absence of Austrian co-operation, be capable of any effective action, and might therefore be expected to be sent to Egypt. In such a case a diversion from the Red Sea might prove useful. If this were a correct interpretation, a request for Indian co-operation would probably be made in November, and everything must be ready for instant action. Any operation to the Eastward, such as Batavia, would be out of the question, and the blockade was therefore of no further use. A concentration of all available naval and military forces in a central spot, from whence it could move to the Red Sea or any point on the west coast of India during the north-east monsoon, should be made. Such a place was Trincomalee. 'My earnest request to your Excellency,' he wrote, 'is that you will proceed to Trincomalee without delay, where Colonel Wellesley will, I trust, be prepared to meet you, to concert with you new plans of operation as may appear best suited to the purposes of the armament and to aid you with every exertion within his power. . . . Your Excellency may be assured that I shall employ every possible effort to provide for the protection of the Sand Heads and of the northern part of the Bay of Bengal against the enemy's cruisers, and that I shall direct the Government of Bombay to adopt similar measures for the defence of the trade on that side of India, with a view to enable your Excellency to concentrate your force with more facility for the urgent and important purposes of offensive and defensive operations on an extensive scale.' Rainier, when he received this letter, was already on his way to the rendezvous for the expedition.¹ He had the *Victorious*, some frigates and a portion of the transports with him. He returned to Trincomalee, where he remained till February 1801, when he sailed, with twenty sail in company, for Bombay,² for the operations in the Red Sea.

But though both the Mauritius and Batavia projects

¹ In letters, 27th February, 1800.

² Captain's Journal, *Suffolk*, 1801.

were thus dropped in favour of the Red Sea and Egypt, in Wellesley's mind they were only in abeyance. As there was a great probability that Baird's expedition might arrive too late (for the orders, instead of arriving as he expected, in November, did not come until January¹) or might find that no effective action was possible in the Red Sea, the whole force, or such part of it as Baird thought necessary, was to be employed 'with all practicable expedition' in the capture of Mauritius and Bourbon, or of Batavia. The tonnage requirements for the expedition absorbed not only all the shipping at Calcutta; the whole of the ports of India could not furnish enough for 3000 men without using most of the East Indiamen; and this, stopping as it would the important Indian trade, could be justified only if there were positive certainty that the Government would be required to send this large force to the Red Sea. This certainty owing to the failure of the Home Government to give the information in November, or December at the latest, did not exist; and Mornington's difficulties and responsibilities were correspondingly increased.

Of the two naval officers whose letters figure principally in this correspondence, Blankett died at Mocha during his service in the Red Sea. Rainier survived till 1808. He had seen much hard fighting in his career, largely in the East. He was with Pocock in his three determined actions with d'Aché,² and at the capture of Pondicherry and Manilla. In the war of the American Revolution he was present at two sieges and all five of Hughes's severe battles with Suffren. He went out to the East

¹ 'I certainly expected that his Majesty's commands would have reached me at an earlier period of the season, in which event the preparations made by my orders at Ceylon, Madras and Bombay would have enabled me to execute his Majesty's intentions at the most favourable season for the navigation of the Red Sea' (Mornington to David, 10th February, 1801). As it was, only the fact that preparations—the chartering of transports, assembling of troops, equipment, &c.—had been independently in anticipation of orders, rendered it possible to do anything. Otherwise the movement would have been impossible.

² 29th April, 1758; 3rd August, 1758; 10th September, 1759.

Indies in 1794 as a Commodore, reached flag rank in 1795, and remained as Commander-in-Chief until 1804—a remarkably long command. He died leaving a quarter of a million, largely the proceeds of the captures of Amboyna and Banda Neira, of which he left by his will one-tenth for the reduction of the National Debt.¹

The Cape of Good Hope was so closely associated with India that the letters from that station are included in this section: indeed, in Lord Mornington's eyes 'the great utility of the Cape of Good Hope is to serve as an outpost to our Indian Empire, and a depôt from which seasoned troops may suddenly be drawn for the defence of our possessions in the East in any emergency that may arise.'²

Holding these views, the Governor-General maintained close communication with the Cape. In a letter to Sir Roger Curtis on October 24, 1800, he said: 'A constant and unreserved correspondence on every question affecting the mutual interests of India and the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope subsisted between the Earl of Macartney, the late Sir Hugh Christian and me. Sir Hugh Christian constantly advised me by every opportunity of the strength, condition and distribution of the squadron under his command. This intercourse was productive of important benefits to the public service.'

The following lists show the strength of the naval forces of the Royal Navy and Bombay Marine at this period of the war:

THE SQUADRON IN THE EAST INDIES, UNDER THE COMMAND OF VICE-ADMIRAL RAINIER (1799)³

<i>Ships.</i>	<i>Guns.</i>	<i>Commanders.</i>	<i>Remarks, &c.</i>
SUFFOLK	74	Peter Rainier, Esq., Vice-Admiral of the White Captain R. Lambert	Captain Lambert returned home in an Indiaman, on account of ill-health; afterwards Captain P. Malcolm.

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography.*

² Mornington to Sir George Yonge, 24th October, 1800, *Dispatches of the Marquess Wellesley.*

³ From Schomberg's *Naval Chronology*, vol. iv. (London, 1802).

<i>Ships.</i>	<i>Guns.</i>	<i>Commanders.</i>	<i>Remarks, &c.</i>
VICTORIOUS	74	Captain William Clark	
ARROGANT	74	" Ed. O. Osborn	
TRIDENT	64	" S. Miller	
INTREPID	64	" W. Hargood	
CENTURION	54	" J. S. Rainier	
DIOMEDE	50	" Hon. C. Elphinstone	
LEOPARD	50	John Blankett, Esq., Commodore	
		Captain T. Surridge	
MADRAS	54	" J. Dilkes	
LA FORTE	50	" L. Hardyman	Taken by the Sybille and commissioned.
VIRGINIE	40	" A. Hunt	Died ; afterwards Cap- tain George Astle.
SYBILLE	40	" Ed. Cooke	Died of his wounds ; afterwards Captain J. Turnor.
OISEAU	36	" S. H. Linzee	
ORPHEUS	32	" W. Hills	
FOX	32	" P. Malcolm	Afterwards Captain H. Stuart.
CARYSFORT	28	" J. Turner	Afterwards Captain V. V. Ballard.
HOBART	20	" V. V. Ballard	Afterwards Captain C. Elphinstone.
ALBATROSS, <i>brig.</i>	16	" C. Adam	
ORESTES, <i>brig.</i>	16	" W. Haggit	
TRINCOMALÉ	16	" J. Rowe	Blown up in action with a French priva- teer, in the Gulf of Persia, the crew, ex- cepting two, perished.
VULCAN, <i>bomb.</i>	8	" F. R. Straton	
AMBOYNE, <i>brig.</i>	14	Lieutenant Pulham	
GOONANG ASSI (G.V.)		" H. Stuart	

A LIST OF THE HONOURABLE COMPANY'S MARINE VESSELS ON THE
BOMBAY ESTABLISHMENT ¹

<i>Ships.</i>	<i>Guns.</i>	<i>Swivels.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
BOMBAY frigate	14 12-Pounders and 8 6-Pdrs.	0	22
SWIFT	20 6 Ditto	0	20
INTREPID	14 6 Ditto	4	18
DRAKE	14 6 Ditto	4	18

¹ From *A New Oriental Register and East-India Directory*, corrected to the 4th of June, 1800, from the accounts transmitted to the Hon. the Court of Directors of the East-India Company (London, 1800).

THE INDIAN WATERS, &c. 165

<i>Ships.</i>		<i>Guns.</i>	<i>Swivels.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
<i>Snows</i>				
PANTHER	12	4-Pounders and 2 3-Pdrs.	0	14
PRINCESS AUGUSTA	12	3 Ditto	0	12
VIPER	10	3 Ditto	4	14
<i>Ketches</i>				
PRINCESS ROYAL	10	3 Ditto	4	14
QUEEN	10	3 Ditto	4	14
STROMBOLO	12	3 Ditto	0	12
RODNEY	10	4 Ditto	10	20
<i>Brigs</i>				
FLY	10	6 Ditto	0	10
ANTELOPE	12	4 Ditto	0	12
<i>Schooners</i>				
ALBERT	10	2 Ditto	4	14
COMET	8	12 Pound Carronades	4	12

RAINIER TO SPENCER

Suffolk, at sea. 24th April, 1797.

My Lord,— . . . Your Lordship appearing to have used the term 'Asiatic Seas' to discriminate this station from that of the Cape of Good Hope, I have accordingly taken the liberty to adopt it in the usual style prefaced to my orders, as the denomination of 'Indian' cannot with any propriety be applied, or extended to, the seas eastward of the straits of Salaga or even those of Malacca.

I have the honour to remain, my Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient
and most humble servant,
PETER RAINIER.

CHRISTIAN TO SPENCER

Cape of Good Hope. 31st March, 1798.

My Lord,—I imagine that Tippoo could never have been induced to so open a declaration of his sentiments at the Mauritius without some positive assurance from the French Directory ; and I consequently conclude that some forces from France are to co-operate with him. It will therefore be my object to hold in readiness the means of supporting Rear-Admiral Rainier, if the occasion should require it ; yet as the orders given by Rear-Admiral Pringle to Captain Losack will not permit me to expect the return of that squadron before May, I fear I shall not possess very extensive power on an early moment, but

your Lordship may be assured that I will do everything that I may have the power to effect. I take it for granted that if the French should detach a force, that it will be from the Mediterranean, that they will rendezvous at Rio-de-la-Plata and make the Island of Ceylon their object, in which case it will be difficult that I should be early apprized of their movement. I shall however direct the Chichester to cruise in the vicinity of Tristan d'Acunha, which I conjecture may be their most probable track from Rio-de-la-Plata, with orders to join me so soon as she may obtain any information. The American ship by which I received the Proclamation of Monsr. Malartic sailed from Mauritius on the 26th February and anchored here on the 27th of this month ; she had not then heard of Captain Losack's being off Mauritius. I have the honour to remain with great respect and esteem,

Your Lordship's faithful and most
obedient humble servant,
HUGH C. CHRISTIAN.

SPENCER TO RAINIER

Admiralty. 30th May, 1798.

Sir,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th April, 1797, and return you many thanks for the flattering expressions contained in it. The distance of your station from here, and the few opportunities which occur of communicating with you, leave us so much in the dark with respect to the course of your operations that it is very difficult to write anything upon the subject of them. I shall therefore confine myself to mentioning my satisfaction that

the expedition which was projected to Manilla¹ did not take place at the time it was intended, as I believe the consequence would have only been to risk the loss of most of the ships and troops employed in it, without much prospect of advantage to the service; and though I think it might have been possible to strike a blow at the Spanish fleet in that part of the world, the uncertainty of the undertaking, and the destitute and exposed state in which the absence of so considerable part of your force would have left the coast of Coromandel and the seas in the neighbourhood, were very substantial reasons against it. We have since been informed that the Spanish squadron suffered very severely in the storm which did so much damage to some of our Indiamen, and I hope it is true. I am confident that you will not miss any fair opportunity of annoying them which may offer, and as there does not at present appear much chance of an augmentation of any consequence being made to the enemy's force in the Asiatic seas you may very possibly find some means of attempting it without danger to our settlements from exposing them to an attack in your absence. Though I should hardly have thought it worth while to write expressly for the purpose of mentioning what follows, yet as I am writing, I cannot avoid adverting to the speculations which have for some time past been afloat on the subject of an expedition of great extent and magnitude now fitting out in the Mediterranean ports of France; it is the opinion of many persons

¹ An army had been assembled at Madras under Sir James Craig, with the object of taking Manilla, a part of which actually sailed to Penang, but was recalled in consequence of Bonaparte's successes in Italy and fears that Tippoo might invade the Carnatic (Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, vol. iv. p. 721).

that these preparations or at least a great part of them, are destined to an attack on Egypt, and other parts of the Levant, with a view to carrying their armies on to the East, and I have met with some persons who imagine that, having possessed themselves of Egypt, they will attempt to establish a marine force in the Red Sea and by that means establish a communication with the East Indies, which of course will be calculated with a view of attacking, and if possible of undermining, our influence and power in that part of the world. How far there may be any possibility of carrying this vast extension and apparently romantic plan into effect I cannot absolutely pretend to say; but their ideas are so extravagant, and their successes on the Continent of Europe have rendered them so very sanguine, that though such a scheme is not, at first sight, very probable, I do not think it quite unworthy of some attention, especially if any information which may be received by the Government in India or any other circumstances arising out of intelligence to be derived from those parts of the world should corroborate these vague reports which are here propagated on that subject. The naval part of any such expedition must necessarily be of inconsiderable force and would therefore require but small exertion in comparison with the importance of the object to defeat it; and as the success of it will entirely depend on the improbability and perfectly new character of such a system being prepared for it in time, would, as I should suppose, give us almost a certainty of defeating their purpose. I thought it right to mention all these ideas to you, though, as I said before, I do not (as at present informed) give much credit to the conjecture.

If in the event it should appear that their views are really turned that way you will of course have further communications on the subject. I have now only to mention the names of one or two officers to you for whom I have been solicited and whom I beg to recommend to you for promotion on Admiralty vacancies. Lieut. Robert Evans of the *Virginia*, Peter Heywood of the *Fox*, Geo. Ralph Collier of the *Suffolk's* tender, and W. Waller late of the *Victorious* are of this number and on proper opportunities I shall be much obliged to you to notice them. It seems rather unreasonable to mention so many at once but the distance is so great and so many accidents happen to alter the circumstances of different officers, that the chances of some of them may be out of the way of reaping any benefit by my recommendation even before it reaches you. I am, Sir, with great regard,

Your very obedient humble servant,
SPENCER.

SPENCER TO CHRISTIAN ¹

17th June, 1798.

Sir,— . . . The Proclamation of the Governor of the Mauritius was a very important communication and came out in a very critical time, as it went a good way to determine a point for us which had been enveloped in much obscurity, namely, the destination of an expedition of great extent which sailed from Toulon under the command of Buonaparte on the 19th of last month. It had for some time been reported that the armament was destined for Egypt, but the plan

¹ Commanding at the Cape of Good Hope, with his flag on board the *Tremendous*. Appointed 23rd August, 1797.

seemed so chimerical and romantic that little credit was given to it. It now however appears to be very probable, and the accounts received this very morning in the Paris papers up to the 14th instant inclusive very much corroborate the idea. We have accordingly thought it necessary to act upon it and have for the purpose of saving time sent a small naval force direct from hence to the mouth of the Red Sea. You will in the public letters receive our instructions relative to these points: I shall not therefore waste your time in repeating them here. I shall only say that it was a great satisfaction to me to find that you had determined in consequence of the intelligence to keep a force together in readiness to act as might by further information become requisite. . . .

Your very obedient humble servant,
SPENCER.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

19th June, 1798.

My Lord,—After having considered of all the circumstances that may attend the expedition of the French to Egypt, and their further intentions towards India, I have taken the liberty to offer your Lordship my opinion of that subject. I think that there is reason to suppose that there has been a preconcerted plan with the Governor of the Mauritius as well as with Tippoo Sahib, to assist and facilitate the movements of Buonaparte's army on his landing in Egypt, by a formidable appearance of all the force that can be collected and sent for that purpose to Suez, which being unusual, in the Red Sea, will tend very much to alarm and intimidate the Mameluke

Government, who will naturally consider themselves as exposed to be attacked on both sides. The general winds in the Red Sea blow down from May until the end of August, and the rest of the year up, but I find by the old Portuguese writers that the weather is generally fine except at the changes of the monsoon, and that there are land and sea breezes, such as generally prevail in those seas where there is high land, which leads to a supposition that active ships might avail themselves of such winds in order to secure their passage down in most seasons. However I dare not venture this idea, but as conjecture. If the army of Buonaparte are landed at Alexandria, which is probable from its affording the most convenience, they have then to pass through Grand Cairo on their way to Suez. Your Lordship is well aware of the many difficulties an army must meet in a hostile country to be able not only to carry provisions, stores and ammunition for their own supply, but also to provide for a voyage by sea afterwards, and more so, if we take into the question their being unprovided with the assistance of draft cattle, such as camels and dromedaries which seem only calculated to carry great weight through the soil of that country. From Cairo to Suez there is no water on the road, nor at Suez any except what is brought there on camels; so that the delays and difficulties of providing water and provisions for a fleet of transports must be very obvious. This leads me therefore to suppose that it is not likely Buonaparte will be able to depart from Suez soon enough before the change of the monsoon.

If it was thought advisable, the entry of a sufficient squadron in the Red Sea would effectually render the French plan of proceeding

further totally abortive, but perhaps your Lordship may very justly find objections to this plan. Ships laying at Aden might be considered as guarding the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, but liable to the objection of want of supplies, particularly of water, which is difficult to be found on any part of that coast known to us. It is but just to tell your Lordship that formerly the Portuguese fleet wintered at the Isle of Camoran,¹ situated within the Strait, which implies that water is to be found; but whether in all seasons is still problematic. If Buonaparte cannot get from Suez before the middle of August he will be too late, as the monsoon is then faint, and not to be counted upon for continuance as they frequently differ six days or more. In such case, India can only be visited by a detachment of his force till the next monsoon, but of what they may consist it is not possible to determine if the probability of a detachment is admitted. Your Lordship will have the goodness to forgive this intrusion, but I thought it my duty to apprise you of these circumstances in order that you might be able to form your own judgment on the case.

I have the honour to remain,

Your Lordship's most faithful servant,
J. BLANKETT.

NOTES FROM VOLNEY

(*Enclosed in Captain Blankett's, 19th June, 1798.*)

The Caravan I accompanied in 1783 carried their provisions of all sorts, their wood and even

¹ Kamaran. An island with a sheltered anchorage inshore of it, off the Yemen coast, about 200 miles northward of Perim.

their water, Suez being the place in the world the most destitute of everything. From the tops of the houses you look over a plain of sand, blown about by the wind, and thrown up by the feet of the pilgrims' camels and horses, the eye cannot dwell on the least appearance of verdure, nor is the sight interrupted by a tree or a bush. The ruins of the houses at Suez add to the desolation of the prospect. The only water to be had is brought from El Naba which is three hours' journey from Suez, and that is so brackish as to require a mixture of rum to make it palatable. When the time of the pilgrims passes, and the vessels are gone, there remains only at Suez the Mameluke, who is called Governor, and twelve or fifteen men who compose his garrison. The harbour is only a bad quay where boats can only come in at very high water; the road where ships lay is a league from the shore, between which and the shore is a bank, dry at low water. In a right line from sea to sea, the breadth of the isthmus is 19 leagues. The coast on the Mediterranean side is so shoal as not to be approached at a considerable distance.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

Portsmouth. 3rd July, 1798.

My Lord,—The paper with the extract from the Abbé Beauchamp, appears to me the most reasonable of any I have seen on that subject, and it accords entirely with a plan, which I know authentically was formed in the year 1785 to take possession of Candia, in order to be able to renew the old channels of commerce to India

through the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Perhaps the difficulty at that time was the negotiation of the cession of Candia at the Porte, as I understand it is considered against the law of the Ottoman Empire to exchange any part of the Imperial domain, unless from a positive existing necessity. I had letters from Italy and Vienna stating that something was in agitation relative to Candia, which I mentioned to Mr. Wyndham early in the spring, but we both considered it as a chimerical enterprise, not having known of any previous measures that were connected with it. The missions to Muscat and to India are corroborating proofs of the plan which has existed time enough to be matured for practice. Candia is essentially requisite to the carrying on this plan from its commanding situation, and the extensive harbour of Suda on the north-east side, which is easily made defensible by sea, and will furnish them abundantly with water from a small river near at hand, besides the runs of water within the harbour. The object of restoring the ancient routes for commerce to India must be flattering to France in the extreme,¹ as it would not only be extremely beneficial to them, but would, in their view of the matter, be of the utmost prejudice to us. From having been much abroad I know that foreigners look to the East as the source of our great wealth and power, and your Lordship knows the strength of prejudices that have prevailed uncontradicted by length of time. But although I am convinced of the facility with which these routes might be restored, considered simply as channels of commerce, yet it is as clear it cannot now be done without

¹ Cf. Desaix's memoranda on the point. De la Jonquière, vol. iii. p. 652.

shaking the whole Ottoman power to its foundation. I therefore conclude that no such plans being known, it will be easy to influence the power of the Porte how far ever it may extend, to endeavour to prevent it. The existence of the Mahometan religion will become subject to great risk by the introduction of men who are inimical to all, and the Sheriffs, Bashaws, Scheiks, &c., are too bigoted, and too much interested, to admit of innovation that is to destroy their power.

I have no doubt your Lordship will use your endeavour that the Porte may be apprized to their danger, and it is not improbable that those missions it may be thought proper to send to the different Bashaws and Governors in Persia and Arabia may, at the same time that they cultivate their separate interests, not be altogether unmindful of the extending our commerce, wherever it is possible. For my own part I am impressed strongly that the French will follow up their designs; and as everything at such a moment will depend greatly on the information that can be gained, I will not fail to examine every spot that can offer a means of annoyance, for to use an expression that may be forgiven to a nautical man, 'The first broadside is worth half the battle.'

Your Lordship will I hope take care that I may be as fully assisted from Bombay as possible. The extensive settlements Admiral Rainier has to protect and supply will render many things precarious, and I cannot trust altogether to his assistance, although I may rely on his good will. I know your Lordship encourages activity and enterprise; I shall be extremely mortified if I fail in either, and you may trust my will though you may doubt my power. I beg to offer you

my thanks and best wishes, and to recommend myself to your protection.

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's most faithful servant,

J. BLANKETT.

SPENCER TO BLANKETT

4th July, 1798.

Sir,—I take it for granted that this will still find you at St. Helen's (where I suppose you will go to avoid the Court Martial) unless the wind should take a sudden change. I therefore risk a line to wish you a safe and pleasant voyage, and that you may meet with every possible success at the end of it.

We have accounts in the Paris papers received to-day that Buonaparte on the 12th June captured the Island of Malta. Our fleet was not up in time to prevent it, but I should suppose would hardly allow of his proceeding much further at present; and if he loiters there longer I think he will be in a scrape at last. It does not appear very likely after this that he will go down the Red Sea this season, or the Euphrates this year; however, it will be not amiss to establish some stumbling-block in his way.

I am, with great regard, Sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,

SPENCER.

Lieutenant Austin Bissell whom we have appointed first of the *Daedalus*, is reported to me to be a good man, and I shall be much obliged to you to mention him, as one of whose advancement I am desirous, to Admiral Rainier.

MITCHELL TO SPENCER

Percy Street. 5th July, 1798.

My Lord,—Since I had the honour of addressing your Lordship, my thoughts have constantly been employed on the subject of my last letter, and I take the liberty of laying before your Lordship some further observations concerning it. The magnitude of the force, and the secrecy of the expedition, leave no doubt but that its object is the attempt to exterminate the British from India. To frustrate that object would be a happy event, and where there is a probability to do it my zeal for my country animates me with the hope of its being attempted. It is now about 44 days since the Toulon fleet sailed, its progress must be slow, and allowing the usual time for such fleets, calms, contrary winds, the delays often occasioned by inattention and bad management, I think they may have only reached the first point of their destination—Alexandria. This is by far the easiest part of their voyage, for the obstacles to be surmounted from that to what I call their second point, their embarkation in the Red Sea, are innumerable, and more than what any man unacquainted with the country can possibly imagine. From this second point of departure, my own experience informs me of the difficulties which surround them, of the impediments which obstruct them, and which must inevitably retard them and eventually destroy many of them (were I even to allow an impossibility, that they have vessels enough to receive them all at once). The navigation of the Red Sea, even if they are in time for the proper season, must be tedious and dangerous in the extreme

for such an armament. No advantage can be derived from local knowledge ; there being no pilots as in other countries to afford assistance they will be destitute of every help but their own resources and thus rest on their seamanlike skill and their common cautions, the qualities of which I am confident they do not possess sufficiently to ensure them from great loss nor to hinder them from great and embarrassing delay. It's with this view of the circumstances which may attend this, I may call, unparalleled expedition, that I am strongly impressed with the idea, and in the most respectful manner offer my sentiments of its being a wise precaution to detach a squadron. I should propose one line of battle ship and four or five frigates, with four or five months' provisions and stores with as much water as possible, to be got ready with every dispatch ; to only touch at the Cape of Good Hope for water and provisions, which should be done in a few days, and to proceed to a point of rendezvous at the entrance of the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, which it should reach in about 10 or 11 weeks, or three months at furthest, from the time of its departure. The object of securing that important point would have the happiest effect, as it is morally impossible there can be vessels sufficiently to transport the whole of the enemy's troops at once. If one half of them should have escaped before the arrival of the squadron (by no means probable) the other half must remain for the return of the ships which must be destroyed or captured with the troops and the communication with India put an end to for the war. This would be the proof of our active exertions, and would amply reward us for our vigilance and foresight ; no mean speculation, the destruction

of so formidable, if I may add so furious, an army, and the preservation of our vast territorial possessions in India. These, my Lord, have been my considerations for some days past, and I offer my services to your Lordship to carry them into execution. My knowledge of those seas would give me more confidence and activity than one totally unacquainted could have, and where prompt measures are necessary, the success of the enterprise may in a great degree depend upon them. The offer I now make to your Lordship is of the most disinterested nature.

I have no view, and I trust your Lordship will believe me, than a view to serve my country. I have no wish to interfere with any other station. The command of the Cape and India are foreign to my purpose : the design I have is to counteract a great plan of our enemy on a service *isolé*. The object of that service obtained or destroyed, I shall return and resign my command with the inward satisfaction of having done my best and also endeavouring honourably to serve my country. In whatever light your Lordship, and if I may add, this country, see this powerful armament, he must perceive the danger which is threatened. If it should, in spite of us, reach India, and rekindle the flame of war there, it will require the hearty co-operation of all hands to extinguish it. All the means then should be tried to weaken Tippoo's strength, and lessen his resources. All our exertions will be required to protect our own interests and to destroy his. The Malabar coast will become the seat of war as well as the Carnatic. A bomb vessel would be useful on the Malabar coast as well as in case of meeting the armament in particular situations in the Red Sea, as I believe shells could be thrown

into Mangalore, &c., Tippoo's principal fort. I commanded the ships at the relief of that port and received the Company's thanks for my conduct without weakening the army. As this is an uncommon expedition with a new object to defeat, our strength must be proportionate to their's and guided with all the skill in whatever quarters of it it is to be found.

The expense attending this small squadron will be but little in addition to what it now is, as the ships are employed. Should even the design of the enemy change, but if on the contrary he should persevere, it is incalculable the evils it may prevent in saving the country from a dangerous war.

I must again repeat my readiness to serve and if your Lordship will entrust me with this command I pledge my honour that your Lordship's wishes shall be the invariable rule of my conduct.

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's most faithful
and most obedient servant,

A. MITCHELL.

P.S.—I beg leave to add it appears that the ex-Director L'Tourneur was charged with an important and delicate mission to India in the year '93, but for greater circumstances was laid aside. Barras served in the regiment of Pondicherry and was there during the siege of 1778 and afterwards was with Suffren; it is more than probable from this circumstance, it's a creation of his, as its management is confided entirely to his friend and protégé Buonaparte.

SPENCER TO MITCHELL

Admiralty. 5th July, 1798.

Sir,—I am much obliged to you for your letter of this day, and am very glad to see that the mind of a person who is so conversant as you are with the parts of the world to which it relates has been led into very much the same train of reasoning as has presented itself to my own upon the subject.

The offer you make of your services demands my thanks, and though circumstances are such as to prevent my accepting the proposal, I must feel bound to consider it as an additional proof of your zeal for the public service.

I am, Sir,

Your [&c.],

SPENCER.

CHRISTIAN TO SPENCER

Cape of Good Hope. 10th July, 1798.

My Lord,—Your Lordship will perceive by the disposition of the squadron that Captain Osborne is off the Mauritius. The motives which induced me so immediately to make a detachment upon that service was the report made to me by Captain Losack of the state of that island, and the probability that Monsieur Malartic would be inclined to treat respecting the surrender of it. I know well that circumstances of difficulty would arise, even in the event of Monsieur Malartic making any proposition, yet I feel it my duty to be prepared to meet any such negotiation. I feel it would be difficult to obtain from this

garrison a sufficient number of troops for such purpose ; however, Lord Macartney and myself have put the matter in such train that M. Malartic (if he ever has entertained such sentiments) may be induced to venture. . . .

I have the honour to remain, with great respect and esteem,

Your Lordship's most obedient

humble servant,

HUGH C. CHRISTIAN.

*MEMO BY LORD SPENCER ON THE
FRENCH OCCUPATION OF EGYPT*

3rd October, 1798.

It appears to me very clearly that it will be utterly impossible for the French to proceed toward India this season, and from the circumstances in which their army is placed it is highly probable that it will be entirely destroyed. However, as it is prudent to be guarded against every possible event, we must not make ourselves too sure that they may not even under all their difficulties succeed in establishing themselves in Egypt.

They are in possession of Cairo, Alexandria, Rosetta and Damietta, and it is not likely that with their skill in land war, the Mamelukes will be able to recover any of these places from them by any other means at least but starving them. Cairo abounds in all kinds of provisions except wine and spirits, and it may perhaps be possible for such an extraordinary man as Buonaparte to persuade his people to live without these articles. Alexandria is full of all the supplies which the French brought there, and unless the

mouth of the Nile can be most closely blocked up by sea, means will certainly be found to convey them to Cairo and perhaps even in the case of the passage being cut off by sea after a certain [time] the inventive and enterprising spirit of the French officers may find a means of sending them by land across to the Nile and so up the river to Cairo. The [operation] however is not very probable considering the animosity of the people of the country against them, and nothing could enable them to try it but having gained over a considerable number of the Arabs and Bedouins to their side, which by the intercepted letters they were trying to do ; their doing so, it must be allowed, will have become infinitely more difficult since the defeat of the French fleet.

Every measure, under this view of the subject, must, and undoubtedly will be taken to distress them as much as it can be done by sea as long as Nelson or any of our officers can remain on that coast, and when they are obliged to quit it, either for want of supplies, or on account of weather, an arrangement for this purpose ought to be made with the Turks and Russians.

Frigates would do this business very well, but unless some English frigates are there the service will be but imperfectly performed.

Captain Capel reports that a body of 5000 Mamelukes were coming down [towards] Rosetta and Damietta : if these places could be regained and kept, the business would be done ; but from the accounts of these people in all the intercepted letters, I do not think it very likely that they can succeed against the French except, as I before observed, by starving them.

After all, if Buonaparte should establish a colony in Egypt it is most probable that the next

operation will be directed to India, and though I have no doubt but that at the beginning of the next season Commodore Blankett will be at the mouth of the Red Sea with a strong squadron, it will become doubly necessary to watch the ports of France in the Atlantic (the only ones where they have any naval force) that they may not slip out a strong squadron with the intention of proceeding direct to the Red Sea and bringing off the remains of the army.

DUNDAS TO SPENCER

Amniston. 5th October, 1798.

My dear Lord,—By a silly accident in my hand I am unable to use it, and have therefore borrowed Lady Jane's to return you my very best thanks for all the satisfaction which your letter just received has afforded me. My secretary joins me sincerely in this sentiment, for although it has been my duty to put the best face I could upon it, I can assure you with great truth, I have not had one hour of real comfort ever since I heard of Nelson's return to Syracuse. It was one satisfaction that the public did not seem fully sensible of the danger to which they were exposed.

I do not mean to say that even if a French army had got to India means might not have been fallen upon, in various ways, to collect a force there to leave us ultimately victors in the contest for our Indian Empire; but it would have been a tedious conflict, and attended with such an enormous expense, as to have rendered it very doubtful whether this country was equal to it either in point of inclination, or ability.

From the statement you give me this morning it is now better that Buonaparte did land ; for if his army (of which there is every prospect) is destroyed in Egypt, it will prove such a warning to all future adventurers, as to discourage them from attempting a similar enterprise ; and your Lordship knows as well as I do, that the possession of Egypt, with a view to India, has been long a favourite project with more nations than one. Amidst other fortunate circumstances attending this business it is a very pleasing one to be able with conviction and cordiality to bear up the fame of Sir Horatio Nelson. It would have been the duty of Government to have done it, at any rate, as he must have acted from the best of motives, but it is a much pleasanter predicament to be the panegyrist of his glory and utility, than to be the defender of an unintended mistake. Such would have been Sir Horatio's situation, if after leaving Alexandria he had never again met with the French fleet. I am extremely curious to know whether Buonaparte ever knew that we had a fleet in pursuit of him in the Mediterranean. If he did, his proceeding from Alexandria, leaving his stores, &c., in the manner you mention, proves him to be a desperate and presumptuous madman.

I remain, my dear Lord,

Yours very sincerely,

HENRY DUNDAS.

RAINIER TO SPENCER

Bombay. 1st December, 1798.

My Lord,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's favours of 30th May and 17th June last, and in reply to such points

thereof as regards the public service, beg leave most respectfully to refer your Lordship to the particulars of my public letter of this date. I have not heard from Commodore Blankett yet, nor are there any late arrivals from Europe on the Cape of Good Hope. One to-day from the Straits of Malacca and China left everything quiet in that quarter. The informant left China in the middle of September, everything was as it should be in that quarter. The *Arrogant* was at Prince of Wales's Island the 10th of October but not spoke with. I am assured by the Bombay Government that there is an absolute certainty of being duly informed of any attempt of the French to invade Persia in time to send a detachment of the King's ships to oppose the French in their attempt to procure transports in that Gulf. We are more alarmed about their possible progress in the Red Sea, than in any other quarter. It is therefore absolutely necessary to keep a respectable force on the Malacca coast, as the French may have got out of the Gulf of Mocha, from whence we have no very late accounts. If not, 'tis impossible for them to do so till March; but after all, it will, as I am informed, be extremely difficult, if not impossible for them to collect vessels of any kind, now that the powers on the Arabian [coast] are alarmed, as all the craft to be procured are at Jedda, where the Sheriff of Mecca would certainly prevent their falling into the possession of France, by burning them. Expresses requiring assistance are gone to the Cape of Good Hope, from Calcutta and Bombay. I shall upon every opportunity attend to the advancement of those officers your Lordship is pleased to recommend to my notice, and in every respect to exert my best endeavours to merit

your Lordship's approbation of my public conduct. I have the honour to remain, my Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient
and most humble servant,
PETER RAINIER.

SPENCER TO CHRISTIAN

23rd December, 1798.

Dear Sir,— . . . I shall say nothing on the subject of Monsr. Malartic and the Mauritius, as it does not at present appear that anything further has occurred. The loss of that possession would certainly be a great inconvenience to France, and complete the obstruction which has been so happily thrown in the way of her Eastern plans : but I feel in its full force the weight of the objection to which the execution of any measure like that to which you allude would be liable. . . . I am concerned to hear so indifferent an account of your health as you give in your last letters. It is strange that the climate of the Cape should have so much gout in it, but I hope that you will soon be so seasoned to its effects as not to feel them in the manner you have hitherto done.

I am, dear Sir, with great truth,
Your very obedient humble servant,
SPENCER.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

Leopard, East Coast of Africa.
16th January, 1799.

My Lord,— . . . On the 10th (December) by a vessel from Muscat I learned that the French had landed at Alexandria and had got to Cairo,

which I have since had confirmed by a vessel from Socotra. I have ever since been endeavouring with various success to get up the coast to find some place where I can get water, and mean to try at Brava and Magadoxa. . . . I have now been eight weeks on this coast trying my utmost to get on, with various prospects of success, and at length have found it indispensable to send the *Daedalus* to the Cape of Good Hope for a supply of salt provisions and spirits, articles not likely to be procured where I am going. . . . Everything now depends upon the supplies I can procure, either at Brava, Magadoxa or Socotra ; and from circumstances I must take my measures ; so that I find it difficult to tell your Lordship what I shall do, any further than to assure you I will do my utmost.

From all I can learn there does not appear to have been any preconcert for the movement of an army down the Red Sea. The boats I have spoken mention the French with great acrimony, and it does not appear easy to me to reconcile the interests of the Sheriff of Mecca, the Imaun of Muscat, the Bashaw of Bagdad, and other smaller princes, to those of the French, who are in direct opposition to the strong prejudices imbibed by the religion and politics of those sovereigns. I cannot therefore think the task would be a hard one to convince these Governments that any connection with the French was subversive of all those principles they have been brought up to revere, and endeavour to inculcate. . . .

I recommend myself to your protection, and have the honour to be

Your Lordship's most faithful servant,

J. BLANKETT.

SPENCER TO CURTIS

Admiralty. 26th February, 1799.

Dear Sir,—In consequence of the conversation which I had with you when I had the pleasure of seeing you in town, I have been turning in my mind in what manner your service might be applied with the most advantage to the public, and it has occurred to me that the command-in-chief at the Cape of Good Hope now vacant by the death of Sir Hugh Christian will be a situation in every respect as proper and satisfactory for you as any that it is in my power to suggest; with this view I trouble you at present with a line and shall be glad to know your sentiments with as little delay as may be convenient to you, as some other arrangements will be dependent on your determination.

I am, dear Sir, with great truth,

Your very obedient humble servant,

SPENCER.

RAINIER TO SPENCER

Sceptre, Bombay. 1st April, 1799.

My Lord,—My public letter to Mr. Nepean by this conveyance contains every circumstance of my proceedings necessary for their Lordships' information. The state of affairs here at present are rather of a more serious aspect for the moment than usual. Your Lordship must be apprized before this of the war with Tippoo Sultaun. Hostilities were commenced the 6th ultimo by the Sultaun, who made a smart and judicious attack on the small army under Lt.-Gen. Stuart,

at Sedapoor near Periapatam on the top of the Ghauts directly above Cavnanore, who had in charge the provisions for the whole army for the campaign. The Sultaun gained some advantage from surprise in the beginning of the attack, but was finally repulsed with considerable loss. Lt.-Gen. Stuart is now so well posted as rather to invite than decline another visit from the Sultaun : 'tis now reported that he has retreated. An attack has also been made on the Carnatic army under Lt.-Gen. Harris, by a body of Tippoo's cavalry, in which a company of European Grenadiers were cut to pieces. We hourly expect to hear of the junction of the two armies, when the siege of Seringapatam will immediately be undertaken. My particular anxiety has for its object the doubt of the safety of his Majesty's ships and convoy in their way from China, for the reasons assigned in my letter to Mr. Nepean. Lord Mornington has urgently solicited me to leave some of the strongest ships of the squadron at Bombay, which will require some consideration, and cannot be determined upon yet, partly for the reason above-mentioned, or until we hear further from the Red Sea. The weak state of this garrison at present appears to be his Lordship's principal motive for the application, desiring they may remain for the whole of the next monsoon, which is the foul one. The event of the campaign will in a great measure be my guide in determining on this requisition, as also the general good of the public service.

Your Lordship's most obedient

and most humble servant,

PETER RAINIER.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

Leopard, Mocha Roads.
3rd May, 1799.

My Lord,—I wrote to you on the 16th ultimo,¹ informing you of my arrival in these seas, and wish it was now in my power to give you a more satisfactory account of our affairs here, but all the intelligence I have yet received is so very vague and contradictory that I can place no dependence on what I hear. There is no direct conveyance to this country, owing to the suspicions and jealousy each power has of its neighbour, so that all communication is confined within the limits of each jurisdiction. The Centurion and Albatross as I wrote to your Lordship are gone up the Gulf; they left Jedda the 30th March, and I was told yesterday that they were seen off Tor; if so, when they return, I may get some certain information of the enemy's strength and situation. They are said to be 17,000 men. If what I hear is true, Buonaparte has not been able to collect many boats, nor does it appear possible that he can procure sufficient to transport any number of men or that he can

¹ Actually, 17th April: he wrote from Mocha Road: 'If Buonaparte is not relieved by a sea force coming into these seas, he will not be able to maintain himself in Egypt, and therefore will probably make some desperate push with the shattered remains of his army to annoy us where he can. As to his building boats to transport his army down this sea, I hold that it will take him more time and timber than he has to spare, and unless we furnish him by our own folly by exposing our ships to be surprised, or run aground, I think it will be difficult for him to find the means of embarking any number of men, with provisions and water to carry them to India. This country is decidedly hostile to the French, who they consider more infidels than other Europeans, who they likewise honour with their general hatred and contempt.'

find provisions or water for a voyage of any length, confined to the periodical winds which prevail in these seas, which will make it the more easy to intercept his passage. I am therefore led to conclude that he must have given up his Indian expedition for the present, and I may perhaps wait for a squadron of French ships in these seas, that may be equal to give him protection ; for without such assistance, I do not see the means of extricating himself out of his present situation which no doubt he has rendered too formidable to be much disturbed by a Mameluke army. There seems a delay on the part of the Turkish army. The Bashaw Ahmed Gezzar, who is said to command it at present, had not begun his march from Acre on the 15th March, and this delay has its influence on the different Arab Governments, who appear not to be without distrust at the motions of the Grand Signior, whose power in this country is scarcely more than nominal, but whose designs are always supposed inimical to that sovereign power which they have assumed, and which they conclude the Porte has always wished to reduce.

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The people as well as the Governments seem partial to the English and in general hostile to the French ; it is my business to increase that disposition, and from appearances I am not without hopes to conciliate their good offices towards us, which is so essentially necessary in the present crisis of our affairs. I shall proceed to Bombay whenever the door of these straits is locked. The Leopard wants repair, and my health a moderate climate, with less fatigue and anxiety than I go through at present from circumstances

which cannot now be changed, and that it would be ridiculous in me to endeavour to point out.

I beg to recommend myself to your Lordship's protection, and remain

Your faithful servant,
J. BLANKETT.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

Leopard, Mocha Roads.

24th June, 1799.

My Lord,—The accounts I continue to receive by the boats that daily arrive here with pilgrims on their return from Mecca are still so vague that I can give them little credit. The report is that there has been an action favourable to the Turks, and that the advance [guard] of the Turkish army were in march to Suez. All that I know with certainty is that the French were throwing up a redoubt at Suez to command the town, and that they had planted some guns to protect the entrance of the harbour. They had about two hundred and fifty men, mostly cavalry, and about fifty Arabs who were attached to the Port from which there was a communication with Cairo, that a carrier could pass in twelve hours from one place to another. They had no boats, nor no visible means of building any. This is all the information on which I can place any dependence, and from which I must conclude that Buonaparte's attention is not turned towards the sea at this moment. But when I reflect on the imbecility of the different Governments in this country and the ease with which he might make himself master of any place he chose to attack, I cannot bring myself to determine that he has no views to the sea at all. In regard to

the commerce to be carried on by this Gulf, I am confident we were never aware of the full consequence of it ; the passage at proper seasons from the N.W. of India to Suez and back again is so short that the change of land carriage from Cairo to Suez when once established, would be of little consideration, and by this conveyance would pass coffee, tea, spices, muslins, and all the finer assortments of light goods, which could meet with no competition in the Mediterranean, from whence they would make their way to the German fairs and through all the Austrian dominions. This, without any further preface, I am sure is sufficient to convince you how very dangerous it will be that Egypt should remain in native hands. The commerce of the Gulf itself is susceptible of much improvement, but it depends in a great measure on a quick vent in Egypt to render those advantages immediate. It would be very easy to lessen its consequences, for the Governments of the country are fickle and without system, their commerce is temporary and their agriculture precarious. Any import therefore stops the whole machine, whose springs are so weak that if once let to run down it cannot be wound up again for a century. . . . I have the honour to be

Your most faithful servant,

J. BLANKETT.

RAINIER TO SPENCER

Suffolk, Madras Roads.

30th July, 1799.

My Lord,—The last dispatches from Rear-Admiral Blankett are under date of 28th ultimo, from the Island Perim, and bring no intelligence

of importance. The disappointment of not finding water on that island will possibly render it untenable. The Bombay Government will no doubt write the Court of Directors more fully on this subject. They have lately sent their large frigate there with casks and suppose it does not appear they have been yet able to penetrate more than twelve feet into the rock. The Centurion has been up to Suez. The Albatross still remains. The enemy have thrown up some works there, and had a small garrison of about 200 men to defend them. Nothing else occurred deserving notice. What few Country boats were lying there were destroyed. Captain Rainier represents the navigation of the Gulf as dangerous, and most of the charts and nautical description of it as very erroneous. The Sceptre sails for the Cape the day after to-morrow with a convoy of three valuable ships of the Company. The other three ships belonging to the Cape station will be sent back as soon as possible—one or two of them I mean shall proceed to China to take the homeward-bound ships from thence under their protection. The Trident also to go on this service and finally to Portsmouth. The Braave to remain to dock.

I have the honour to be with every sentiment of the most profound respect, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and most humble servant,
PETER RAINIER.

SPENCER TO BLANKETT

Admiralty. 4th August, 1799.

Sir,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 7th December, 1798, and the

16th January last, and am much obliged to you for writing, as I was beginning to be rather uneasy about you. I am sorry that you were so long delayed as to be caught by a contrary monsoon on the coast of Africa ; however, as it happens, the delay will not have been productive of any harm, as the enemy have been very completely occupied and their progress arrested from other quarters. I am now expecting with some anxiety and impatience to hear from you either in or near the Red Sea, where from the last accounts which Sir Sidney Smith has sent us from the coast of Syria, you may perhaps still have the luck of a share in the destruction of the grand Egyptian expedition. I am afraid, however, for your sake that a very small portion of it (if any) will reach you. In any event, you will, I hope, be able to obtain some useful information from a part of the world with which our Navy is in general but very little acquainted, and the appearance of a British naval force on the coast of Arabia cannot fail to have beneficial effects to our interests and influence in that country and its neighbourhood.

I am, Sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,
SPENCER.

SPENCER TO RAINIER

Admiralty. 17th August, 1799.

Dear Sir,—We have as yet heard nothing here of Admiral Blankett, but I trust it will not be long before we do ; and from the means you have very judiciously placed in his hands, I have no doubt we shall hear of his having completely

succeeded in obtaining the command of that important point, the immediate consequence of which is now fortunately rather diminished by the complete defeat of the French expedition of Egypt, and their discomfiture in all the southern parts of Europe.

I am, dear Sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,
SPENCER.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

21st August, 1799.

My Lord,—I have received two letters lately from the Sheriff of Mecca, desiring two frigates might be sent, one to Suez and one to Kosseir, to assist the people in retaking the latter from the French. In his last letter, dated at Mecca the 29th July, he informs me that the French are preparing the brigantine at Suez for sea, of which he has notice from a courier he had sent thither and who was only seven days on his return; that the English and Turkish fleet were before Alexandria, and had begun the attack three days; that they had been joined by thirty-three Russian ships, but that he could not tell their force; that the Turkish army were at Gizeh on their way to Cairo; and that Buonaparte's army was much reduced. As the Sheriff has the means of information, and that this intelligence is likely, I give it credit; but it appears to me, from the Sheriff's pressing us [for assistance in] the Gulf, he is not without apprehension on his own account. Most certainly if Buonaparte makes a show of attacking Jedda or Yanbo,¹ it will make a great

¹ Yanbo-el-Bahr, the port of entry of Medina.

diversion of the Turkish army, who must push on to prevent the famed cities of Medina and Mecca from falling into the hands of the infidels, and such idea I endeavoured some time ago to impress on the mind of the Sheriff, in order to feel his pulse, to know whether he could trust his friend Buonaparte or not. I conclude the march of 2000 men to Ghenna¹ from whence they may easily get to Kosseir, has alarmed the Sheriff as it has done me, until I can satisfy myself on that movement: for should he send to Yanbo, he may seize on thirty dhows; should he seize on Jedda, he is master of six ships and twenty dhows, by which means he may become at least troublesome in these seas. Should he be again defeated he may count on the revolt of all the Arabs and Copts that he has now with him; they are too fickle to support a stranger in a contested war any longer than he continues to be the victorious leader; and this must force Buonaparte to take some extraordinary plans to extricate himself and his army from their present situation. In short, I consider this campaign as decisive whether the French shall be driven out of or remain in Egypt. I therefore mean to go to Jedda to come to an understanding with the Sheriff to refuse any trade that shall pass to any port in possession of the French, who I mean to declare in a state of blockade, and to enforce as far as I can the Sheriff's declaring himself against the French.² If I find difficulty in the

¹ *Sic* Kineh. He refers to the march of Belliard's force, which left Kineh on the 26th May and reached Kosseir on the 29th, and occupied the town and fort without opposition. His force was 350 men and 750 camels (De la Jonquière).

² The French occupation of Kossair—'the important establishment France had now acquired in the Red Sea'—according to Belliard, was 'of the highest importance to the trade which France would conduct with the Indies, and would assure the

accomplishment of this measure, the result will be obvious, and I must act upon it as well as I can, but I flatter myself I can sincerely without violence. The wish, therefore, to forward the King's service makes me risk a very shattered constitution, and I sometimes think that as I am half burnt out, the rest shall go to the accomplishment of the wish to do the service I am sent on with zeal and perseverance. The French took possession of Kosseir the 14th June, on hearing of which, as our trade was exposed to Jedda, I dispatched the *Daedalus* and *Fox* to Jedda against the monsoon, and they luckily arrived there in time to send away the convoy under protection of the *Fly* and sailed themselves the day before their departure for Kosseir, with orders if they found it in the hands of the enemy to destroy it. Your Lordship will naturally suppose it was not knocking down an old Arab castle I considered of consequence, further than the effect it would have on men's minds. The Arabs are extremely ignorant and their ideas are wild and romantic. They are impressed with a notion we command the seas, which has been much heightened by seeing us move about without regarding the monsoons. If Captain Ball succeeds they will hold that nothing is impossible to us, and it is right in me to keep up such an opinion, and avail myself of those advantages, as it is the next thing to having positive power in my own hands.

I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's most faithful servant,

J. BLANKETT.

army tranquil possession of Upper Egypt.' Bonaparte wrote, 'The occupation of this place, of Suez and of El Arish closes completely the entry to Egypt on the sides of the Red Sea and Syria, in the same way as the fortifications of Damietta, Rosetta and Alexandria render an attack from sea impossible; and assure to the Republic for ever the possession of this fine territory.'

RAINIER TO SPENCER

Suffolk, Bombay Harbour.
10th December, 1799.

My Lord,—I am concerned to inform your Lordship that small French privateers have lately made several captures on the coast of Coromandel, most of them at the latter part of the S.W. monsoon, at a period when his Majesty's ships were going backwards and forwards on the coast from Friar's Hood to the Sand Heads of Bengal River, on different services. I have frequently taken occasion to point out to the merchants the security that would result to their trade from their ships sailing with convoy, which I would endeavour to accommodate them with as far as might be in my power, which they have generally disregarded. I am, however, induced to believe 'tis a plan not very compatible with the nature of the trade they carry on, which principally consists in bold speculations, requiring caution and secrecy in the execution. The most regular trade going forward by sea is that to and from China ; and even in this, there has been of late much adventure in that way, several of their ships last season having disdained the protection of his Majesty's ships, though duly apprized of their appointment.¹ I cannot dispense remarking to

¹ The disposition of the vessels employed on the defence of trade, as given in a list of 12th October, 1799, is as follows :

Orpheus	32	} At Molucca Islands, for defence of trade about the islands.
Hobart	20	
Vulcan	<i>Bomb</i>	
Trinkamally	16	Persian Gulf, for defence of trade (subsequently destroyed in action with a French privateer).
Imperieuse	38	To China, with convoy, and then to take convoy thence to the Cape.

your Lordship the prejudicial custom in the merchants in this country of arming their ships completely, having generally a tier of guns in their upper deck, with ammunition in proportion, to give them the appearance of ships of force, while they are only manned with natives who are seldom known to stand to their quarters ; the mischief of which is, that when taken by the enemy they immediately become privateers fit for service. A reinforcement of small cruisers on the station is extremely desirable, particularly if the forces now in the Red Sea will admit of no reduction ; to which purpose I now write to Rear-Admiral Blankett. If it should, the two fifty-gunships might I think be ordered home, particularly the Centurion whose frame is much decayed, and any number of armed brigs with heavy caronades your Lordship might think proper to send, substituted in lieu. With due deference to your Lordship's superior judgment, I take the liberty to suggest that it might be a measure of great advantage to his Majesty's service as well as the protection of the British trade eastward of the Cape of Good Hope as in the discouragement it would be to the enemy's privateers, if the commanding his Majesty's ships on that station could be placed in a situation to keep a

Trident	64	To China, with convoy, and to take convoy from the Cape to England.
Providence	<i>Schooner</i>	To China, after Imperieux.
Diomedé	50	To Malacca, to meet E.I. ships leaving Bombay in October, convoy them to China and take a convoy to the Cape.
Sceptre	64	To Cape of Good Hope with a convoy.

The main body of line of battle ships was assembled on the Malabar coast. Blankett, with four ships, was in the Red Sea, and two more were joining him, escorting a convoy and transport with stores and provisions, and yet another two small craft in carrying dispatches to Blankett.

force constantly cruising off the French Islands,¹ by regular relief, to obstruct as much as possible the sailing of their cruisers and privateers, and to intercept prizes. As that service has hitherto been conducted, it has answered very little purpose ; a strong squadron, comparatively speaking, has appeared off there for a few weeks, and then disappeared for several months afterwards.

I submit to your Lordship's consideration the propriety of withdrawing any of the line of battle ships from this station, as according to present appearances their services may be spared ; nevertheless beg leave to observe to your Lordship that although the enemy from whom we had most to fear is completely subdued, yet our great successes have excited so much jealousy at the courts of the principal country powers as to leave little room to doubt but that they would willingly listen to any overtures from the French to our annoyance ; particularly the Mahrattas, who possess some convenient harbours in their maritime territories, where there is depth of water sufficient for the admission of frigates and transports, such as Geriah and Divogur in the neighbourhood. Their almost irreconcilable dissensions are, I believe, our best security for their peaceable conduct at this juncture. To the above consideration in favour of still keeping all the line of battle ships in the country may be added the great impression their appearance makes on all the native chiefs and their subjects in general. It would ill become me to remark, if the chief credit of the measure was not to be ascribed to the wisdom of your Lordship's administration, how much this circumstance, joined to the active services of his Majesty's squadron, contributed to the downfall of Tippoo

¹ Viz., Mauritius and Bourbon.

Sultaun and the final conquest of the Mysore country in co-operation with his Majesty's and the East India Company's land forces. . . .

I have the honour to be, my Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient
and most humble servant,
PETER RAINIER.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

Bombay. 17th December, 1799.

My Lord,—I have lost no opportunity of writing to your Lordship by every conveyance through Muscat, Bussorah and Bagdad; but as I know that an English letter by an Arab messenger is liable to many accidents, I cannot suppose they have all come to hand. I had become very uneasy at the French having taken possession of Kosseir, and the more so as the Sheriff of Mecca had taken no notice of it in his letter. I was therefore led to believe that it was by his connivance, as a small force would have stopped the French in their route across the desert from Kineh to Kosseir. I therefore ordered the *Daedalus* and the *Fox* to endeavour to work up against the monsoon to Kosseir, and finding it in possession of the French to endeavour to destroy it, which service they effectually performed. My intention was to awe the minds of the Arabs by such an attack, as well as to check the French in their designs, whatever they might have been, towards the sea. This purpose was fully obtained, and I found on my arrival at Jedda that the cannonade of Kosseir had been a most effective precursor, and had disposed the Arabs very much to listen to my proposals. I refer your Lordship to my public letter with its accompaniments for the particulars of my

transactions at Jedda, which I hope will meet your approbation. Your Lordship will observe that I have been rather dissatisfied with this Presidency for having sent out Colonel Murray to take possession of Perim, without giving me the least notice of such a measure, or instructing him to advise or consult with me for the public service. They likewise put the ships in their marine as well as transports under his orders, over whom I had neither directions nor control in any eventual circumstance that might arise; the consequence has been, that while I was absent on my passage to Jedda, he has removed with the greatest part of his force to Aden, the event of which does not promise to be favourable to our interests in the Red Sea. The Presidency here, I believe, are now sensible of their error, and I hope in future to go on with that confidence and good understanding so necessary in the prosecution of all public service; and in the meantime I have the satisfaction to say that no differences (except in opinion) has arisen through the whole of the transaction. I do not know how we can attack Buonaparte from this quarter, but I mean to propose trying to cause a desertion from his army, and if force will not succeed, all other measures must be attempted. In this, as in all former cases, I must act from the circumstances of the moment, as nothing points itself out from which any positive conclusion can be drawn. Your Lordship may be assured I will act with all possible zeal in the prosecution of this service, and my endeavours shall not be wanting to merit your further protection.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your most faithful servant,

J. BLANKETT.

CURTIS TO SPENCER

Cape of Good Hope. 12th January, 1800.

My Lord,—Not having been on shore when I had last the honour to address you, I could speak but little of the situation of things here. The information I have subsequently obtained is detailed in my public letters, and I flatter myself my observations and proposed conduct respecting our storehouses, &c., will be approved of by your Lordship. I have said that effectual reparation is altogether impracticable, and it seems inexpedient to recommend the erection of new buildings, which would cost an enormous sum of money, if the fate of this colony was at all uncertain; and I presume, however much it may be deemed advisable to retain this settlement, it is uncertain what general arrangements will be finally adopted in the intricate adjustments to be made upon the conclusion of the war, when such various and jarring interests are to be reconciled. Whether the keeping possession of this colony will be advantageous to Great Britain, is a very important question of politics. Speaking of the country at large, it is I think physically impossible it can ever be fruitful or produce articles of any consideration, the exportation of which would render it a prosperous and rich colony. . . .

To me therefore it appears clearly that this colony, merely as a colony, can never be of any advantage to Great Britain. What advantage the Cape may be to us as a post, or what mischief it may be to Great Britain if in the hands of another nation, are questions of a nature very distinct from colonial considerations.

Much has been said about Saldanha Bay, and the propriety of making it the chief rendezvous of shipping. Nothing can be more desirable than such a measure, if it be practicable, for certainly neither Table Bay nor Simon's Bay can be called safe anchorages at any season of the year, and respecting the former, which lies between the chief town of the colony, besides its exposure to the N.W. and northerly winds, rendering it unsafe, the gusts of winds it is subject to from the mountains, and which continue sometimes with great violence for several days together, put a stop for the time to all intercourse with the shore. But if it were practicable to make Saldanha Bay the port it could only be for the men-of-war, unless Cape Town was abandoned and a new one built at Saldanha. It seems to me, however, extremely doubtful whether Saldanha Bay can be made the chief rendezvous for even the men-of-war from the want of fresh water. Wells have been sunk to a considerable depth, but the water found was, as has been reported to me, of so very bad a quality as to be totally unfit for use. It is said that at the distance of 5 or 6 miles there is a spring or rivulet sufficiently abundant and so elevated in the situation that the water from it may easily be conducted to the Bay in pipes, and at no very great expense. But the thus acquiring water is not the only consideration in a measure of such magnitude. If the Bay is to be made the naval port, storehouses and various other buildings must be erected, and to prevent the stores and buildings being destroyed by the sudden incursion of an enemy, they must be surrounded by some kind of fortification and there must be a suitable garrison. Now these fortifications must be made

to extend to the source from whence you obtain your water, in this instance perhaps further, or if an enemy makes an attempt upon you with a force you cannot meet in the field, he destroys your water-pipes and you must surrender everything at discretion. There must be, therefore, an inexhaustible supply of water within the works, which must be erected round the arsenals that must be built at Saldanha Bay to make it the naval port of the colony ; and it appears to me the measure would be inexpedient and unwise ; and whether fresh water can be found in a situation suitable for the purpose has not perhaps been finally determined. But until a supply of water has been unequivocally ascertained, I think it is premature to consider Saldanha Bay as a fit place for making a naval establishment. I hope to be able to visit it myself, but when I shall have time for it I cannot foresee, for every day brings its full employment.

I am astonished at the idea entertained in England of this country. I believe the picture I have drawn of the land to be a just one. The sea is not more pleasing ; for gales of wind at all seasons of the year are very frequent and often violent and of much longer continuance than the storms usually are in the British seas in the depth of winter ; and these gales are accompanied with very heavy seas.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient and
most faithful humble servant,

ROGER CURTIS.

P.S.—Nothing can be a greater proof of the little cultivated land there is in this country than that although the whole population of Europeans or the descendants of Europeans does not exceed

twenty-two thousand persons, yet families have wandered to the distance of 600 miles from the Cape to find a promising spot to fix their habitation, though in these remote parts they are in danger of their lives, and at all events, subject to depredations from the Boshesman, Hottentots and the Caffres.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

Bombay. 17th January, 1800.

My Lord,— . . . I have found Vice-Admiral Rainier here, who being of opinion that my presence was still necessary in the Red Sea, I have not declined to go, being willing as long as I am able to perform the duty entrusted to me to the best of my endeavours ; but my health has suffered from the climate, and my situation is sometimes made very irksome. I cannot act from myself, and the distance and difficulty of intercourse with a commander-in-chief on the other side of India is attended with too many inconveniences to be proper for me to describe in a private letter. I will, therefore, beg your Lordship to facilitate my return to England if the service of the Red Sea should terminate this season. Situated as the enemy are, they are completely out of my reach. I have no way to annoy them, so that my situation is neither likely to be attended with either profit or honour, although it is attended with circumstances of a most disagreeable kind.

I have been to Jeddah and settled the business of the trade of the Red Sea *pro tempore* with the Sheriff. He disclaims the knowledge of all trade to Suez and begs ships going thither may be

seized as traitors to himself and to me. He only states what is known for a truth, that without being allowed to trade to Egypt for grain his country must perish through famine. That is a point which I shall endeavour to arrange with the advice of this Presidency or that of the Governor-General, to whom this Presidency have written on the occasion.

From all I can learn, the French in Egypt are not in such an abject state as I see represented. They are in temporary want of wine, but of cattle, grain, vegetables and fruit they have abundance. Nor do they want money, ammunition or stores. I am told Buonaparte has written to the Sheriff of Mecca for saltpetre. Your Lordship will please to observe that my information amounts to no more than combining a few facts together, always liable to be mistaken. I sometimes flatter myself that there are discomforts in the French army in Egypt which might be increased; but when I reflect I have no means to come at them, nor even to remove any large body were they to surrender, I feel myself useless. If the Governor-General takes up any measure soundly and will give me the means I will try my utmost *per fas aut nefas*, but so much job attaches itself to everything in this country that it is difficult to move with such a clog. In dealing with the Arabs I have to do with the most artful and deceitful scoundrels in the world. They are all avowedly venal, avarice is the predominant passion, and it is certain you may buy whatever you want of every kind through the whole of the Happy Arabia as well as the stony or desert part of this vast country.

The want of language has hitherto been a great prevention. The Government here are

searching through Surat and other places for an Arab who understands English and can write and read his own language, but such a person has not yet been procurable.

Your Lordship may be assured I will do my utmost, but I have a barren soil to work on, with many impediments; what may be the produce I must leave to time to decide. I recommend myself to your protection, and have the honour to remain,

Your Lordship's most faithful servant,

J. BLANKETT.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

18th January, 1800.

My Lord,—I have written to your Lordship several private letters as well as those I have written to the Board; but as at this distance all correspondence is liable to interruption, I shall run over the general outline of affairs from my arrival in the Red Sea to the present time, by way of recapitulation, that your Lordship may see at one view what has been done.

I arrived at Mocha on the 13th April, 1799, with the *Leopard* and *Orestes*, in positive want of everything, having previously detached the *Daedalus* for provisions to the Cape of Good Hope. At Mocha I found Captain Wilson charged with the character of Company's Agent there, who had been at Jeddah to notify his arrival to the Sheriff of Mecca, and who had begun a political correspondence with all the Arab Princes in the vicinity. The accounts, however, that he was furnished with were so vague and contradictory that they only served to mislead me if I attended to them. I found the *Centurion* and

Albatross had gone up the Gulf, but without informing me of their object, or time of return. I knew nothing certain of Buonaparte, either as to his situation or force, except by an intercepted letter to Tippoo Sultaun, in which he intimated his design to visit India. Of the practicability he had of doing so I was ignorant. I could not collect sufficient information of the Red Sea on which to form my judgment, and the season was advancing in which ships were to make their passage down from Suez, and consequently the time in which if Buonaparte attempted it all, he was to make his passage to India. My obvious business therefore was to guard the Straits until I could learn better how to dispose of the small force I had, and to endeavour to gain intelligence of the enemy's situation. I therefore dispatched a boat to recall the Centurion and Albatross to Mocha, which I considered as my general rendezvous, all ships passing through those Roads on their way up and down the Red Sea, the opposite coast being unknown and supposed to be surrounded with reefs of coral at some distance from the shore.

Whilst I remained inactive at Mocha, for want of stores and provisions, a vessel arrived from Surat with letters to Captain Wilson that he should notify to the different Governments that a force was soon to arrive to take possession of the Island of Perim in the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb; but not a word was written to me on the subject. Some days after, the Princess Charlotte, armed India-ship, arrived, convoying the Baker storeship dispatched by Vice-Admiral Rainier from Bombay, and with them came a detachment of men for the island, guns, stores, &c., with an order from the Admiral to me to

proceed immediately to assist the debarkation, and to give protection to the island. But not one word from the Bombay Government of their object, their wishes, or that there was to be any co-operation with me for the conduct of the general service.

As soon as possible I went down to the island, where I found Lieut.-Colonel Murray had landed his men, and had with him the Strombolo, Company's cruiser, the Jehangier, Hercules and Upton Castle, three large ships with a tier of guns each, with luggage-boats, powder-boats, and all the apparatus for a large settlement ; but without any letter of any kind from the Bombay Presidency to me. I was not long left in doubt that the whole was under the positive direction of Colonel Murray, and that it seemed a determined point that the intentions of the Presidency were to be conducted without any interference or co-operation with me on the subject. A mode so new in itself, so incompatible with the good of all public service, and so peculiarly liable to accidental circumstances that might arise in these seas where the most careful experiment and understanding was requisite to carry on the King's service with propriety, that I must own I felt for the irregularity, not to say folly, of such a measure. Luckily no disagreement ever took place between Colonel Murray and myself ; we had been before acquainted, and we have always remained on the most friendly and intimate footing. I found, however, that this settlement was a tie on me. Their situation was irksome, and their wants many. At the requisition of the Colonel I left with him the Princess Charlotte, for the further protection of the island, although I was [of] opinion that her assistance was by no

means necessary. Some time after, having been joined by the Fox and Daedalus, I kept them cruising to windward and occasionally employed in trying to gain intelligence, as well as a further knowledge of the Red Sea.

The Centurion joined me early in June and brought an account that the French had taken possession of Ghenné¹ on the Nile, a place at which most of the corn boats were in the practice to collect. In July the Albatross joined me from Suez, by whom I learnt that Buonaparte had returned to Cairo from the expedition against Acre, with 6000 men, and they wrote me from Jeddah that the French had marched a detachment from Ghenné and taken possession of Kosseir. As I had now some little more knowledge of the Red Sea, and had learned, by comparing accounts, to form some judgment of the general state of affairs, and that I had reason to mistrust the Mecca Government whose communications had been always false or futile, I became alarmed at the French extending themselves in the Gulf, and determined to convince the Arab Princes that we would dislodge them whenever and wherever it was possible. I therefore dispatched the Daedalus and Fox against the monsoon to Kosseir with orders to destroy it if they found the French in possession. They arrived there on the 14th August, and finding French colours flying at the fort, they levelled it completely and returned to me at Mocha on the 26th.

In the meantime the Fly, Company's cruiser, which I had kept for some time at Jeddah for the purposes of intelligence, came from thence conveying the trade down to Mocha, by whom I understood that the Suez ships and vessels which

¹ Keneh, Qina.

were at Jeddah were preparing for sea. As this intelligence, added to my doubts of the Sheriff of Mecca's intention, continued to alarm me, I was determined not to quit the Gulf until I had satisfied myself fully on this subject. I therefore prepared to go to Jeddah although the monsoon was setting in against me. Just as I was on the point of sailing, the Bombay, Company's frigate, arrived at the Isle of Perim and sent me the important account of our success at Seringapatam. Although this news put me very much at ease for India I thought it still best to proceed and endeavour to settle matters with the Sheriff before I left the Red Sea, and sailed accordingly for Jeddah. On my arrival there I found our knocking down Kosseir had been a good precursor. I met no difficulties in my way, everything yielded to my request, as your Lordship will observe from the official letters sent home.

As the time was now past for the navigation of the Red Sea, and that I had no longer any apprehensions for India, I judged it most conducive to the King's service to proceed according to the tenor of my orders to Bombay, to repair and refresh the ships and refresh their men, who were very much in want of it, and I arrived here with the Leopard, Centurion and Daedalus on the [17th] December. The Daedalus has been in dock, has had both her masts out and is now refitted. The Leopard is still in dock having lost all her false keel gripe and damaged part of her main keel and bottom. She will be obliged to be new-coppered, which at any rate was wanted as that she had was bad at the first, and has been on since she was built.

When I arrived at Mocha from Jeddah I found to my surprise that Colonel Murray had

withdrawn most of his troops from Perim and was gone to Aden, having left some sepoy on the island. As this measure was entirely his own, the Presidency here are to judge and to be answerable for its propriety, so that I can only say I hope it will not occasion any jealousy or lead us into any scrape with the Arabs.

I can assure your Lordship that although I have suffered very much in my health from the intemperance of the climate where the thermometer is from 93° to 96° night and day for some continuance, that I will not decline the service you sent me on whilst I am able to perform it and think I can be useful; but should circumstances change, and that my presence in the Red Sea should be no longer requisite, I hope you will forgive me if I return home and leave Admiral Rainier in his sole command in these seas. A second officer in India can gain little profit or honour, and is amenable more than the chief, and more exposed to censure of all sorts. I recommend myself to your Lordship's protection which I shall probably want when I come home. I have made no contingent bill which I believe I am not admitted to do when under a commander-in-chief without an order from him; and in the course of service in the Red Sea I am often obliged to do things out of common routine, as well as make purchases that are rather unusual—for instance on an average for water and boats occasionally to bring it off I pay 15 rupees *per* ton and so on [*words undecipherable*] endeavour to be as economical as possible for which it is likely I shall not gain credit.

I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's most faithful servant,

J. BLANKETT.

SPENCER TO RAINIER

Admiralty. 11th May, 1800.

Dear Sir,—I have to acknowledge receipt of your letters of the 30th July and 11th December, 1799, to the first of which it does not occur to me that there is at present any answer required. I am obliged to you for your observations contained in the latter relating to the improper trade carried on in the Indian seas. I had some communication on the subject with the Deputy Chairman of the E.I. Company who will, I think, most probably make some use of the information. It might certainly be a great advantage to multiply the smaller cruisers on your station, but while the demand of those vessels continues to be so great and urgent in the European seas, I fear that it will be impracticable to supply you from home, and it may probably be more advisable to continue to avail ourselves of the assistance afforded by the armed ships belonging to the Company, though in some respects that mode may be liable to objections. You will no doubt have heard before this can reach you of the final evacuation of Egypt by the French, in consequence of which the proceedings of the squadron in the Red Sea becomes of little comparative importance for the present, and I shall therefore say nothing further on that subject, nor can I enter in the question respecting the repairs of the *Forte* frigate, for which I perceive that the Navy Board have received bills to a very unusual amount, as I have not had an opportunity of being informed of the particulars of the case. Before I conclude I must take the liberty of recommending to you for promotion Captain

Haggitt of the *Orestes*, whom I have every reason to believe very deserving of it, and also Lieutenant Johnson of the *Arrogant*; and I will not detain you longer at present than to say that I am

Your very obedient humble servant,
SPENCER.

SPENCER TO BLANKETT

Admiralty. 11th May, 1800.

Dear Sir,—I take the opportunity of the sailing of an East India convoy to-morrow to acknowledge the receipt of your several letters of the dates mentioned in the margin,¹ and at the same time to thank you for the clear and interesting information they convey.

The circumstances have so materially changed since that time by the final evacuation of Egypt by the French, that the subject of your letters is become rather now like matter of history than anything else. I am however fully convinced that your presence in the Red Sea had a very salutary effect in discouraging any projects which the enemy might have formed of acting in that direction, and I feel persuaded that had an opportunity offered the squadron under your orders would have gained us as much credit as has been acquired by other divisions of the British Fleet in other parts of the world. I have not heard of you since your arrival at Bombay, though I have heard that you were arrived there; I hope the change of the climate will have been useful to your health, which I was concerned to see had

¹ 17th April, '99; 3rd May, '99; 8th May, '99; 6th June, '99; 24th June, '99; 28th June, '99.

suffered by the heat of the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, and I remain with great truth, dear Sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,

SPENCER.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

Jeddah. 30th June, 1800.

My Lord,—I had the honour to write to you by an overland dispatch dated the 15th inst. in which I signified some hopes of being able to bring over the Sheriff of Mecca to have assisted us, in case the further promotion of the war in this country should be determined on, but some events have arisen to make me think that we cannot safely rely on his assurances.

He has received an express from Cairo, as you will see mentioned in my public letter, which has informed him of the retreat and state of the Turkish army, at the same time as it has given him notice of the French having gained over Murad Bey, by agreeing that he should hold the Upper Egypt independent. He sent me word at the same time that the Grand Vizir had been tricked by the French, who appear to have been intriguing with the different Arab chiefs.¹

It was easy to see the Sheriff looked on the Turks as a lost cause, and while he was in this opinion news arrived that the Bashaw Yousef, the Turkish Governor of Medina, was dead ; on which the Sheriff ordered away the Turkish Resident here and all his adherents. The duties of import and export at Jeddah were usually

¹ Desaix writes to Belliard in May 1799 : ' You know that I have treated with the Sheikhs of Kosseir and Yanbo ' (De la Jonquière, vol. iii. p. 651).

divided between the Porte and the Sheriff, but this has lately been withheld altogether. It therefore appears that the Sheriff is resolved to take this opportunity to throw off all dependence on the Porte, and at any rate he has gone too far already to wish to restore the Turkish Government in Egypt. He has set out for Mecca where he has convinced several of the Arab chiefs, over whom he has much influence as the Head of the Church, as well as from having the disposal of the largest revenue in this country.

The Arabs are extremely hostile to the introduction of infidels into their country, but at the same time they are from prejudice of religion not friendly to the Turks who are of a different sect, so that an artful man like the Sheriff can play between both and purchase those he cannot convince. We might possibly still be able to act on the Sheriff, either by threats or promises, for his trade and his ports at our discretion. But his interests are so little known, that it is not easy to touch the right string. I do not know how to explain myself better to your Lordship than by telling you that he will certainly endeavour to keep the Turks out of Egypt if it is in his power. It is the English only that can overawe him, but that can only be done by orders from England. To say further would lead me to explanations I have no right to suggest.

It is not likely that he will aver his hostility to us, he is too much in our power, but we cannot rely on any assistance of his, without having some security for his performing his promise, should he be brought to give one, in our favour. Colonel Murray is continued as the Political Agent for the Company in these seas, and has written to me to signify his reappointment.

I can only repeat my assurances to your Lordship that I will continue to act with the utmost zeal during my continuance on this service. I have already mentioned to your Lordship the impediments that lay in my way, the want of authority how to act.

I have the honour to be

Your most faithful servant,

J. BLANKETT.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

Jeddah. 12th July, 1800.

My Lord,—As I wished you to be as well informed of the nature of affairs here before I quit this Gulf and repair to Bombay, I have sent this by a []¹ conveyance, having written to you of the 15th and 30th June last.

I think there remains little doubt that the Sheriff of Mecca means an obstinate independence of the Porte. He has withheld the duties payable to the Grand Signor under frivolous pretexts since the French invasion of Egypt, and his late seizure of the Turkish effects here, and his treatment of the Resident and his wife, seem to confirm his intentions. I have no doubt that he will support the French as far as he is able by softening off the asperity of the Bedouin Arabs towards them, for the French have always hitherto been obliged to escort all their supplies with strong convoys for fear of those Arabs who have been always ready to way-lay them, according to their laudable mode of carrying on the war.

The Sheriff has been told that it was a common language in the Turkish camp that after they

¹ Word indecipherable.

had settled Egypt they would chastise the Sheriff of Mecca. This, true or not, has worked upon his fears, and he believed when I left this to go to Suez, I had meant to have brought back a detachment of the Turkish army and demanded the payment of arrears due to the Porte. In this opinion he remained until my peaceable demeanour and the change of circumstances made it no longer probable.

If it should be resolved to carry on the war here by sending a force from India, the concerted hostility of the Sheriff will be dangerous in the extreme, he must be gained or pressed to some avowal of his intentions.

If it should be thought more wise to let things remain as they are, I can be of no further use here. There is no force whatever in these seas, nor the means of forming any, and the Presidency of Bombay have appointed a Minister for the political affairs of this country who corresponds with the Arab Princes without any communication with me, so that I am altogether useless.

I shall hope to receive some instructions by the time I arrive at Bombay and shall regulate myself accordingly. I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's most faithful servant,

J. BLANKETT.

Since writing as on the other side, I learn that the Sheriff is determined not to admit a Turkish Governor in future at Medina. He has convened the Arab chiefs at Mecca and is tampering with them and the guard here is nearly doubled. The Sheriff is a man of no genius, he thinks that political lying is the whole art of Government and he exercises himself more like a swindler than a politician. This is called

cunning. His avarice is his ruling passion, but he prefers the advantage of the present moment to his future interests.

I am now so much master of the *carte du pays* that I could nearly annihilate the whole commerce of the Gulf: there are many ways to do so, some open, some more secret. Your Lordship has seen Lord Mornington's sentiments on that subject.

CURTIS TO SPENCER

Cape of Good Hope. 6th August, 1800.

My Lord,— . . . By all I can learn of the disposition of the people of condition at the Mauritius, they are rather inclined to Monarchy in France than the present order of things; but I am not of opinion they would readily resign the island to England. Some think, however, that if a strong force was sent against it resistance would be feeble, were they unequivocally assured they should not at the conclusion of the war be given up to the resentment of France. I am not of this opinion, for were we in the possession of the island the privateering from it would cease, by which it has been greatly enriched, and by which many individuals have incredibly large fortunes; and I think the better opinion on the subject is, that however desirable to us the possession of the Mauritius may be, it is not to be obtained but by such a force being sent against it as could not be resisted. . . .

I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most faithful and

most humble servant,

ROGER CURTIS.

SPENCER TO BLANKETT

Admiralty. 17th August, 1800.

Dear Sir,—I have now before me your several letters of the 21st of August and 17th December, 1799, and of the 8th and 21st of January, 1800. The irregularity and uncertainty of the conveyance is so great that the former of these only reached me three days ago (nearly a twelvemonth subsequent to its date) and the others in the course of this month.

It would be useless to enter into any particular discussion of the contents of your letters, as to the circumstances of your operations and situation at the time those were written, as all those circumstances and the situation are so entirely changed before this can reach you that it would be of no use. I shall only therefore confine myself to saying that I have derived great satisfaction from the general tenor of your proceedings since you have been upon that station, and though the turn of affairs has hitherto prevented it from being so active a post as at one time there was a prospect of its becoming, I am persuaded that had there been a call for measures of more difficulty or exertion, the talents requisite for either would have been found in you, and would have been employed to the best purposes. What you mention of the state of your health gives me much concern, but if that cause should continue for your returning home, the Board have authorised your return by a provisional permission sent out to Admiral Rainier some time ago. Since I last wrote to you the Egyptian campaign seems to have taken another turn, and it still appears a matter of great uncertainty how

it yet may terminate ; you will have means of judging on your side which we have not here (at least not till it is too late to act upon them), but it appears to me that as long as there is any French army, or anything like it in that country, it will be necessary for us to be as much upon our guard on the side of the Red Sea as possible, and therefore all the means of maintaining a naval force in that quarter should continue to be industriously cultivated by us. Uncertain as I am when this may reach you, or indeed whether it will at all before your return to England, I will pursue the subject no further, and will only add that I am with great truth, dear Sir,

Your very obedient humble servant,
SPENCER.

SPENCER TO RAINIER

Admiralty. 28th August, 1800.

Dear Sir,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st February by Captain V. V. Ballard, and am glad to find that you had determined to send Admiral Blankett to the Red Sea again, with a sufficient force to maintain the complete command of that quarter ; being fully persuaded that till the French have entirely quitted Egypt it will be incumbent on us to show, both to them and to the Powers situated in the neighbourhood, that we are able to prevent the execution of any hostile designs they may form in that direction. I observed with some concern the difference of opinion which has occasionally arisen between the Rear-Admiral and Lieutenant-Colonel Murray, and I cannot help fearing that the measures which have been adopted respecting

the occupation as well as the evacuation of the island of Perim, have been attended with less advantage to the public service than might have been the case had there been a fuller previous concert between the commanding officers of the two services and the Presidency of Bombay. I hope however that the experience of inconveniencies which must have been felt on that head will tend to promote a more confidential and cordial co-operation in future ; and I must do the Rear-Admiral the justice to observe that however he may have differed in opinion on various topics, he appears always to have conducted himself with a spirit of conciliation and a temper which does him credit. I think you judged perfectly right in remaining on the Malabar coast when you did so ; and I trust that, however the final removal of the enemy from Egypt may have been delayed (which has arisen from a variety of untoward circumstances), it will not be much longer before that country is relieved from them : an event which appears to me essential to the tranquillity and security of our Eastern possessions. I am very much obliged to you for the appointment of Mr. Richmond to be a lieutenant in the Centurion and for your recollection of Lieutenants Heywood and Evans, and I must beg to take this opportunity of recommending Captain Adam of the Albatross for a post vacancy on some early opening and Mr. James Russell, midshipman in the Intrepid (in case he shall appear to merit it) for a lieutenant's commission. I am, dear Sir, with great truth,

Your very obedient humble servant,

SPENCER.

BLANKETT TO SPENCER

Bombay. 15th September, 1800.

My Lord,—I left the Red Sea the end of August, everything there remaining in the same state as when I had the honour to address you last. On my passage here, I was fortunate enough to take the *Clarissa*, a French privateer of 16 guns, who had been very formidable to our trade in India. I learned from the prisoners that Monsr. Villaret de Joyeuse was arrived as Governor from France at the Mauritius, and with him six large frigates which were said to be meant for some operation in the Red Sea. As I have not received a letter from anyone since I left this in February last, I have no means of judging of the validity of such report, and am therefore naturally alarmed at it. I left *La Forte* and *The Comet*, a cruiser belonging to the Company, at Mocha; the *Leopard*, *Fox*, *Albatross* and *Amboyne* are now here, preparing for dock, except the *Leopard*, who will soon be in readiness for sea.

If I can get timely back with my force, I shall be able to defend myself and prevent the enemy, I hope, from undertaking anything of importance in that sea, and I must endeavour to avail myself of my general knowledge of the country to throw every impediment in their way. I have written to Admiral Rainier, but as yet have no answer, and I begin to apprehend he may have sailed for Trincomalee. I am in a very awkward predicament. I cannot ascertain the truth of the French report, and my orders from the Admiral are to join him at Ceylon. In short, my situation is extremely irksome. The Red Sea is a job no longer for anybody, since the troops were with-

drawn no one cares about it, and I am only myself liable to the animadversion of the Commander-in-Chief, who can judge from consequences and express dislike, without my receiving a consolatory note of applause from anyone, whilst I expose my health without a prospect of either honour or profit. It is throwing away the latter days of life to little purpose.

Your Lordship by this time will be pretty well acquainted with the political principles of the Sheriff of Mecca. He is the first object to be attended to, and as his hostile intentions are now very clearly ascertained, it would be easy to counteract him, or probably to gain him, was such measures wished or warranted. He must naturally endeavour to prevent the Turks being reinstated in Egypt; his wish that it should be in independent hands, in order to have all the advantages of its commerce, are subjects that have been so often before him that they are no longer matters of doubt. He likewise, without any great political talents, can see that his interests in the security of his own independence requires that he should surround himself with independent chieftains, such as Ghezzar, the Bashaw of Acre, the chiefs of the Druses and several Sheiks, whose acknowledgement of the Porte is now only nominal, and who cannot wish the full restoration of the Turkish power. To these schemes we appear to be the only obstacle. Your Lordship will therefore judge how far we can rely on their friendship. Our power is what they fear, and whilst there is a naval force in the Red Sea they will not act openly hostile. Was it thought proper to exert that force, it is equal to the annihilation of every branch of their commerce, which would clip their wings most

effectually for a time, and is the only means by which we could assist the Ottoman Cause in these parts of the world, should such a plan be deemed proper.

The people about the Sheriff of Mecca say that he is on very good terms with the Divan at Constantinople, that by means of his Dervishes he finds the way to reconcile all his measures, and they go so far as to say that the Turkish tribute withheld as payment at Jeddah is better raised in another shape at the Porte. Such is the versatility of the Eastern Courts !

Was it possible for the French to forget their insolence, and to declare that they would only hold Cairo and the branches of the Nile as a commercial port, including Suez and the environs, and would agree to the establishment of the Mamelukes in Upper Egypt, I have no doubt it would be admitted, to the exclusion of the Turks ; and that the Turks alone could dispossess them I think is now by no means a problem.

I recommend myself to your Lordship's protection, and have the honour to remain

Your Lordship's most faithful servant,
J. BLANKETT.

RAINIER TO SPENCER

Madras. 30th September, 1800.

My Lord,—The disposition of his Majesty's squadron under my command with the particular points of service in view at this period,¹ are fully

¹ Disposition of the squadron under Rainier, 28th September, 1800 :

Victorious (flag)	Going with Commander-in-Chief to Straits of
Intrepid	Malacca escorting stores for the expedition
Mongoose	to Batavia.

stated in my public letter of this date to Mr. Nepean, extract whereof will be forwarded in cypher by overland dispatch this day from this Presidency. I have not received any particular orders from their Lordships since that of 21st October, 1799. It must naturally have occurred to your Lordship that if the blockade of Batavia is continued in the event of overtures being rejected, it will employ a considerable part of the King's ships now on this station, and that, at an inconvenient distance from it, the Red Sea service will probably still require some attention, so that I conceive your Lordship will judge a reinforcement necessary, especially of frigates, and stout brigs or sloops. The privateers of the enemy are becoming numerous, being encouraged on account of the country ships, whether from England or trading in India, becoming so easy a prey, being manned principally by native seamen. During my absence on the expedition to Batavia I have desired Rear-Admiral Blankett

Suffolk	To the Sand Heads to meet convoy for expedition to Batavia.
Trident	At and about Trincomali.
Daedalus	Cruising off Batavia, blockading.
Centurion	
Braave	
Sybille	
Virginie	Cruising off the Moluccas for defence of trade, under standing orders.
Hobart	
Vulcan	
Imperieuse	Taking convoy to Moluccas, then to Cape of Good Hope.
St. Thomé	Taking provisions and stores to Amboyna.
Leopard	Blankett's squadron, refitting at Bombay.
Fox	
Albatross	
Amboyna	
Forte	Blankett's squadron, in the Red Sea.
Orpheus	Refitting at Bombay.
Arrogant	Refitting at Trincomali.

to pay every attention to Lord Wellesley's suggestions as to the propriety of his return to the Red Sea or of the naval force necessary for that service. . . . I have the honour to remain with great veneration and the most profound respect, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and very humble servant,
PETER RAINIER.

CURTIS TO SPENCER

Cape of Good Hope. 10th October, 1800.

My Lord,—It is my usage to detail matters concerning my department so fully in my official letters, I have little relative thereto to communicate to your Lordship under the permission you were so good as to give me of occasionally addressing a letter to you.

Your Lordship will see by my public dispatches the circumstances of the French frigates that were at Rio de Plata, from which it should seem that the French were again turning their attention to India. In the intelligence from Rio de Plata and the coast of Brazil which I obtained from the commander of a privateer belonging to this place, and which I sent with my official letter to the Board, it is stated that the French had 1500 men on board. It is not meant they had that number of men exclusive of their complements, but that the number of their complements together amounted to 1500.

I believe there are very few regular troops at Isle France, but were the French to carry troops thither and were, in consequence of the troubles which existed in the eastern extremity

of this colony, to send to the Caffres even a few men with an extra supply of arms and ammunition, it would enable these savages, when joined by the disaffected persons belonging to that very distant part of the colony, the district of Graaf Reinet, to cause very serious mischief to the Cape and the neighbourhood thereof; for though, comparatively with the immense extent of this colony, the white inhabitants are very few, yet by a long-standing and unaccountable error in the Dutch Government, they have been allowed to extend themselves five or six hundred miles from the Cape; and as the nature of the soil is much more fertile in these distant parts than nearer the seat of Government, the chief of our food comes from thence. Consequently disturbances there will prevent the necessary and usual supplies coming to us. In the district of Graaf Reinet, which is the part I have just alluded to, the farms are not generally contiguous to each other, but are distinct settlements, each under the almost absolute authority of the owner; and the immense number of cattle of all kinds belonging to such establishments is scarcely to be believed. The proprietors of these farms having artificers of every kind amongst their servants and their slaves, require no aid from general society; and these establishments are a species of little monarchies, the fat and lazy tyrants of which, enamoured with sloth, and wallowing in abundance, do not contribute those general benefits to the colony at large, in the degree they would were their settlements nearer to the Cape. They raise cattle in great numbers, and our principal supplies come from that country; but being driven so great a distance, come to us for the most part jaded and poor.

But the mischief of the farmers being allowed to settle so far from the seat of Government is that when troubles arise there, the Capital becomes distressed for food ; and these settlers being so remotely situated, and generally accustomed to no restriction on their conduct, they are impatient of any sort of control and are ready at all times to invite the Caffres to assist them in opposition to the Government, as has lately been the case ; whereas were the inhabitants of the colony concentrated nearer the Cape, and where in many places the earth is fully capable of cultivation (though not so rich as in Graaf Reinet) the existence of those who live in the Capital and about it would not be so precarious. From Cape Town southward to the Cape of Good Hope little of the land is cultivated because the soil, generally speaking, is not rich, but yet it is for the most part capable of bearing corn, and raising a great deal of cattle ; and if this district was turned to the best advantage, were troubles to exist in the other parts of the colony, or were it even in the possession of an enemy, Table Bay to the westward and Simon's Bay to the eastward of the Cape would still be secure as places of refreshment for shipping ; but in the present state of things, were either of the two before-mentioned events to occur, the consequences would be very unpleasant. Sir George Yonge will doubtless give every sort of information to his Majesty's Ministers relative to the state of affairs at the eastern extremity of the colony. I understand it is all quiet there at present, but I fancy the smallest spark of fire being thrown there would set everything in a flame. These considerations make me regret that I have it not always in my power to keep a squadron before Mauritius, not

only to restrain the privateering carried on from thence, so highly detrimental to the trade in India, but to prevent, as much as possible, the enemy from fomenting disturbances towards our eastern frontier. But to accomplish this I must have ships enough to form at least three distinct squadrons, of equal strength with the force the enemy may attach to the Mauritius, and also to answer incidental calls ; for as the distance from hence to that island is so great that the passage thither is seldom made in less than from 25 to 30 days, and more frequently from 6 to 8 weeks, fewer reliefs of ships would not effectually answer the purpose.

Though the inhabitants of this colony have been greatly enriched since it has been in our possession, and though they enjoy many liberties they were debarred from under the Dutch, yet I am of opinion the number of them attached to us, or to any sort of Monarchical Government, is not great. Born and nurtured in Republican principles, they cannot be reconciled to any other form of Government. There are, however, different views and ideas cherished amongst them. Some lean towards the French ; and it is said there is a small party who wish to become entirely independent of any European power, but, as it may well be imagined, so extravagant an idea has not many partizans. The *Diomedé* being on a cruise pursuant to the instructions contained in Mr. Nepean's letter to me dated the 15th of March last, fell in with a ship from Hamburg under Prussian colours bound to Isle France with a cargo of sundry articles of which the island was in want ; and Captain Elphinstone informed the captain that if he attempted to go to that island he would be met with our ships cruising

there, and certainly be taken as prize. In consequence of this, and at the instigation of a Dutch gentleman on board this ship, a Mr. Predeger who was going to Batavia and who disbursed some money to effect it, it was then determined by the majority on board to repair to the Cape of Good Hope. Upon the arrival of the ship here, owing to quarrels that had taken place on board her, information was given to the Governor that the property in the ship was French, upon which his Excellency caused her to be seized and proceeded against in the Vice-Admiralty Court, and the French papers having been discovered, it is expected she must be condemned—I suppose as a *droit* of Admiralty. The same dissension amongst the passengers in this ship was, I believe, the cause of the Governor's receiving such intimation of the nature of Mr. Predeger's errand to Batavia that when he was going on board an American brig for the purpose of repairing thither, his Excellency caused him to be stopped and took possession of his papers. The Governor will of course inform his Majesty's Ministers of the particulars of all these circumstances.

By my return of prizes, &c., your Lordship will see that with us, where a prize of any kind so seldom occurs, Captain Hotham's little squadron off Isle France has been successful. But miserable as these prizes in fact are, compared with the captures made by the King's ships in other parts of the world, their value to us almost diminishes to nothing, owing to the pretensions of the East India Company that not even prize goods of the growth and produce of countries eastward of the Cape of Good Hope can be sold here for consumption; nor even for exportation if the order of Council be strictly

followed; and in cases where exportation is admitted there are so many difficulties in the way that few bidders appear. So that your Lordship sees how dreadfully we are situated and how we are cut off from those advantages which result to our brethren in every other part of the world by the performance of their duty and their annoyance of the enemy.

I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obliged and
most faithful humble servant,
ROGER CURTIS.

DUNDAS TO SPENCER

Cirencester. 2nd November, 1800.

My dear Lord, — I return you Admiral Blankett's letter. I have not heard of and of course cannot form any judgment upon the correspondence which has passed between him and the Indian Government respecting the Sheriff of Mecca; as an abstract political consideration it is most desirable that the Indian Government should never wantonly disturb the peace and quiet of Mecca, which is intimately connected with the free exercise of the Mahomedan superstitions; but if the ruling power at Mecca takes an active part in confederacy with France, or in aid of it against the Porte, it is undoubtedly the duty and interest of our Government to interfere and check that spirit. I don't know if anything has come to the India House within these few days. I shall know when I come to town,

and take the necessary steps respecting the subject. It may perhaps be necessary to send a dispatch overland to convey to Lord Wellesley my precise opinions on the subject. I trust all the difficulties which have taken place will be smoothed by Sir Home Popham's arrival. He is so thoroughly informed upon all our wishes and views, I think there is little danger of misapprehension.

I remain, my dear Lord,

Yours truly,

HENRY DUNDAS.

I have this morning read over Lord Keith's dispatches which is the first minute information I have received on the subject of Cadiz. When they were there they concluded properly in not making the attack, but I don't yet see that there is any good reason assigned for their leaving Gibraltar, with the disease raging at Cadiz.

CURTIS TO SPENCER

Cape of Good Hope. 28th November, 1800.

My Lord,—In my letter to your Lordship of the 6th August last, I touched lightly on the subject of the Isle France, and you will have observed by the extent of a letter from Captain Hotham to me dated 9th September, and inserted in my official dispatch of the 22nd October, his opinion of the then state of the island; and since his return I have had much conversation with him thereupon, by which he has confirmed the sentiments he expressed as above alluded to, and he appears to have availed himself with great address

of the opportunities his intercourse with the island afforded, to gain information and to obtain knowledge of its present state in all respects, from those belonging to it who fell into his hands, and to have reflected with much judgment on the subject ; and from all I can learn from him, and otherwise, I see no reason to believe that, however the political principles of the inhabitants may vary, they would not cordially unite to repel an attack upon the island : so that I still continue my opinion, we can place no confidence in obtaining advantage from dissension among the inhabitants, and that a successful attempt upon Isle France cannot be made without a force capable of subduing the whole united strength of the island ; and I am of opinion that it could not be taken with less than 3500 or 4000 effective troops. For though there are at present no regular troops on the island, there is a corps of 12, or 1400 men composed of the youth of the better sort of inhabitants, and there are 10 or 12,000 blacks trained to arms : the batteries are also manned with blacks, who have been taught to be very expert artillerists for throwing shot and shells : and I have no doubt that a vast body of slaves would eagerly join in repelling any invaders, in the hope of one day obtaining their freedom under the French Government ; for although the decree for their emancipation has not as yet been carried into effect, they flatter themselves it will, which they could not expect under the Government of England.

I know that much has been said upon the expediency and even necessity, of taking possession of Isle France ; and I understand some provisions relative to the measure have been made to Government in which, as to the facility

with which it may be accomplished, a good deal of stress is laid on the temper and jarring interests of the inhabitants. I put no confidence in such ideas, and I think that in very many instances during the war we have seen the fallacy of such expectations. The indulging such hopes has often occasioned to us disappointment and distress in quarters nearer home than Isle France. But if upon such grounds an expedition were undertaken against this island, and we were unsuccessful, the consequences would be of a very alarming nature. If it were undertaken from hence, the voyage to it with transports could not be reckoned at less than from 30 to 40 days, and if in the S.E. monsoon, it is more probable the passage would be at least ten weeks. The troops, owing to the climate, must not be crowded in the transports, and ships containing provisions must accompany them to support them on the island if *successful*: and if *unsuccessful* to maintain them until they arrived at some place where food for them could be obtained. Some sickness—perhaps a good deal—must be expected amongst the troops, and if the attempt on the island failed it seems uncommonly difficult for them to return to the Cape, or proceed on to India, without touching somewhere for refreshments. I can think but of two places—Madagascar, or the Island of Johanna. The former would I fear rather increase disease than afford alleviation of it, as the climate there is dreadfully inimicable to Europeans for nine months in the year; and as to the latter, it is so frequently invaded and ravaged by the inhabitants of Madagascar, I know not with what degree of confidence supplies from it may be expected.

The reasons for our desiring to have possession

of Isle France seem to be these : It would be depriving the French of the only hold they have in India, excepting Isle Bourbon ; it would render the trade of every description in India more secure, as it is greatly annoyed by the privateers which are fitted out from the island, and to which a squadron of ships-of-war may be attached, as has been the case, that would add much towards distressing the commerce of India ; the contiguity of the island to this colony, by which in time of war in open hostility, or in time of peace by secretly fomenting discord and giving aid to the discontented subjects, and by exciting the Caffres to war and affording them assistance, greatly disturb the tranquillity of the colony, impede its prosperity, and give to its Government and its inhabitants frequent trouble and continued apprehension.

When the taking possession of Isle France becomes a subject of discussion, it must not be forgotten that the island is not sufficiently fertile to support its inhabitants. The most of the corn they consume, and some of the cattle, come from Isle Bourbon ; a great deal of rice, and the most of their cattle, they obtain from Madagascar ; the flour and other provisions from Europe and India. For the most part of this war the inhabitants have been at a stated allowance of provisions, regularly issued to them from the general stock ; and in October last the allowance was very scanty, and had been so for a considerable time. To keep Isle France, therefore, even with the same inconveniences with which the French hold it, we should also take possession of Isle Bourbon ; but I am led to believe that this island is next to being impregnable. Isle Bourbon is infinitely more fertile than Isle France,

but having no harbour, and only one place where ships can anchor, the latter island is preferred to it, only on account of its harbours and anchorages. It is evident, therefore, that if Isle France was in our possession the garrison cannot be maintained from the produce of the island, but must be assisted from other quarters. Without the possession also of Isle Bourbon, nothing can be expected from thence. From Madagascar some rice and some cattle may be obtained, but dependence may not be placed on this island alone. Supposing the colony of the Cape of Good Hope to remain with us, corn, flour, and wine might be procured from thence, but not for a certainty relative to the two former articles, as it frequently occurs, from want of rain, that the harvests in this colony are so unproductive, there is the greatest apprehension the inhabitants will want bread. The remaining resource is India.

The harbour of Port Louis is very small, and from the nature of it may easily be rendered incapable of admitting any vessel into it; but to do this, even were we in possession of the island, would require a very considerable force, as every individual upon it would unite to prevent a measure which would be their total destruction. The other harbour, Port Bourbon, is by no means so good as Port Louis, and being situated on the windward side of the island, is still less valuable, on account of the difficulty ships have in getting out of it to proceed to sea.

Thus, my Lord, have I taken the liberty to offer my sentiments relative to Isle France. I have not presumed to say a word as to the political expediency, or in expediency of making an attempt upon it. I have confined myself to

stating facts, perhaps not generally known, or if known, not sufficiently reasoned upon ; it being the usage of projectors when enamoured of a scheme, not to touch upon, or to speak lightly of such things as may be deemed impediments to the adoption of their propositions.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient
and most faithful humble servant,
ROGER CURTIS.

CURTIS TO SPENCER

Cape of Good Hope. 19th December, 1800.

My Lord,—By my public letter to the Board your Lordship will observe the ostensible, and indeed the chief reason of Captain Wooley's coming hither with the *Arethusa* from St. Helena : but he was besides incited to it by the Governor, to submit to my consideration a project the Governor had formed of attacking the Spaniards at Rio da Plata. A copy of the heads of the intelligence from which he conceived the measure might succeed and the letter he wrote me on the occasion I herewith transmit, and when your Lordship has reflected on the subject, I imagine you will approve of my declining to engage in the undertaking, and which I signified to Governor Brooke by a letter of which I now send your Lordship a copy. Your Lordship will perceive that I avoided all discussion on the subject, which for many reasons I deemed to be inexpedient.

Avoiding a number of the more subordinate circumstances which would require consideration, I shall briefly state to your Lordship the principal

grounds on which I declined undertaking the proposed expedition.

I knew that no troops could be spared from hence, as we have certainly too few at present, considering the situation of the colony, and the posture of public affairs, and as from any information I have been able to obtain, Monte Video is a place strongly fortified, I could not for a moment indulge so chimerical an idea as that 450 men from St. Helena, together with such assistance as might be afforded from the ships-of-war sent on the expedition (even supposing that, viewing the strength of my squadron, I might consistently with my duty employ on the occasion) could carry the place by a *coup de main*; and the idea of a siege under such circumstances appears to me to be perfectly ridiculous.

Your Lordship will observe that Governor Brooke has much reliance on the supposed disaffection of the Spanish colonists. I do not, speaking generally, reckon so much on rumours of that kind as many men do; but I think that, however disloyal the Spanish colonists may be, they would not put to hazard their lives and property by joining so small a body of invaders as 450 men.

If the extent of the Governor's project had been that, in consequence of certain information, he knew there was a vast treasure at Monte Video; that the place was so defenceless it might with 450 men be carried by surprise; the treasure taken possession of, and put on board the ships; and that the expedition was so to terminate, fewer difficulties would perhaps appear. But you perceive, my Lord, the Governor does not mean a measure of that kind. His views extend to the keeping possession of the country, or at

least Monte Video. It being unreasonable to suppose that intercourse with the country for the obtaining supplies can be maintained with a body of men which might be spared from a garrison consisting of only 450, it becomes a serious question how the garrison is to be provided with food. Ships-of-war must be attached to it for securing a safe passage for provisions, and for various reasons, but particularly to catch those rich ships expected to drop in from Lima. But the fact is the situation of affairs at Rio da Plata would soon be known at Lima, by communication sent overland, and no ships would be sent to Rio de Plata. And you will see also, my Lord, that the Governor, during the absence of his troops from St. Helena, stipulates to have a guardship at that island.

Setting aside the objections to the proposal, which I have before recited, and considering the size of my squadron, I am sure I could not justify the depriving this colony of so great a proportion of its naval force as would be requisite for this expedition. It was after giving the subject the maturest consideration, I wrote the letter to Governor Brooke I have before mentioned, and I feel confident your Lordship will approve of my conduct on this occasion.

Notwithstanding what I have before written, I have no doubt that such is the state of the Spanish possessions spoken of, a very important impression might with the greatest care be made on them, by a force adequate to the occasion, and with all the arrangements suitable for an undertaking of such a nature. I should think six thousand men would not only conquer, but keep the country. Countenanced by such a body of men, the inhabitants, if they are really

disposed to throw off the yoke of Spain, will have no fear to declare their sentiments, and act accordingly.

I have the honour to be, with great respect,
my Lord,

Your most obedient and most
faithful humble servant,
ROGER CURTIS.

RAINIER TO SPENCER

PRIVATE AND SECRET.

Intrepid, Prince of Wales Island.
27th December, 1800.

My Lord,—Your Lordship will have no doubt taken notice of in my official letter to Mr. Nepean of this date the objection I have made to the design of an expedition against the Mauritius, presented by his Excellency the Governor-General for my concurrence ;¹ which, although it constitutes my principal motive thereto, yet I have mentioned others to his Excellency either connected with the state and present disposition of his Majesty's ships on this station, or suggested by the very arguments urged (in a letter of the same date, and received at the same time) of again suspending the prosecution of that ordered by the King against Batavia, though in so fair a way promising a successful issue, had it been persevered in on the part of his Excellency agreeable to the assurances he had given me.

'Tis my intention to transmit by the first safe opportunity that offers, the correspondence that has passed between his Excellency and

¹ See Introductory Note.

myself on this occasion and I flatter myself when your Lordship has perused it, and considered the several circumstances therein detailed, my conduct will be honoured with your Lordship's approbation. For the present I shall content myself with stating to your Lordship in as concise a manner as I am able, the reasons on which his Excellency's objections to the prosecution of the expedition against Batavia are principally founded, as equally, if not more forcibly applicable to that I have objected to, and which are nearly of the same import with the arguments that were used in justification of the recall of the Manilla expedition, that were so well accepted.

His Excellency considers that the late successes of the enemy in Italy and Germany will lead the renewed spirit and enterprising genius of Buonaparte to relieve the French army in Egypt, to be speedily followed by an attack on our possessions in India from the Red Sea, and accordingly supposes that his Majesty's Ministers may be shortly expected to demand of his Excellency and myself a force to be employed in causing a diversion in Upper Egypt to favour an attack to be made by way of the Mediterranean on Lower Egypt, by the troops assembled at Minorca, to act in concert with the Turkish army, in order to effect the expulsion of the French army out of that country—a conjecture that Lord Elgin's private dispatches to his Excellency tend to give great probability.

From a consideration of these several circumstances his Excellency makes the following deductions: 'I am decidedly of opinion the Government of India would not be justified in undertaking, or prosecuting, any expedition, the necessary effect of which must be to remove the

strength of your squadron to any considerable distance to the eastward for any long period of time ; the same objection applies in a certain degree to the detachment of our military force in the present conjuncture for the purposes of any foreign conquest, unconnected with our means of defence against the probable point of danger ; this objection applies most powerfully to any detachment of our European force, the whole disposable amount of which throughout India does not at this time amount to ten thousand men.

‘ It is therefore with considerable reluctance, and under an irresistible conviction of the necessity of preparing to meet the emergencies which I have described, that I find myself compelled to suspend a second time the final execution of his Majesty’s commands respecting Batavia, and to request your Excellency’s assistance in carrying into effect a system of operations adapted to the new and alarming crisis of affairs. But the pursuit of any foreign conquest, however easy, or advantageous, must always yield to the necessity of self-defence. The further suspension of the measures commenced against Batavia will not render the prosecution of that expedition unpracticable at a future period ; while the absence of our fleet, and of any part of our disposable European force, in any of the probable cases which I have supposed, might be fatal to our existence in India. I must therefore request your Excellency to consider the expedition to Batavia to be postponed to a more favourable opportunity.

‘ Having decided this important point, it becomes my duty to submit to your Excellency’s consideration a general view of the plan which

appears to me most eligible for the purpose of enabling us to act offensively and defensively, as the case may require, to frustrate any attempt of the French, either for the relief of their army in Egypt, or for the disturbance of our possessions in India, and to answer the expected demand of his Majesty's Ministers for our co-operation in Egypt during the approaching season.'

His Excellency then communicates the plan (not of the attack on the Isle of France) mentioned in my official letter to Mr. Nepean, where your Lordship will also find the date of his Excellency's two letters, and the time of my receipt of them.

The plan for the attack on the Mauritius was projected and presented to his Excellency by a seafaring gentleman who had been a short time a prisoner there, and left it the 5th of August last. The principal points on which he founds his hopes of success are dispatch in the equipment, the weakness of the garrison in point of numbers and discipline, and on the batteries being carried by assault in an attack to be made by surprise, and effecting a landing at nearly the same time at four different places eastward of the harbour's mouth, one of them within it (included). The force he demands for the execution to consist of 3000 (three thousand) troops including every person, and the following ships: One of 64 guns, two of 50 guns, six heavy frigates, one bomb, one sloop, six large transports. The opinion of the officer to command the land forces I have not yet had an opportunity of knowing, but the cutting away of a buoy might frustrate the whole attempt and leave no other resource than a regular attack, to which I apprehend the force by land would be very inadequate. The equipment of the transports has been conducted under the

management of people little acquainted with such matters, wherein if there were any material deficiencies 'tis almost impossible to supply them at Trincomalee, the port of rendezvous. The time of departure was settled by his Excellency for the middle of the present month, which was nearly at hand when I received his Excellency's dispatches, and if it could not take place then, the April following; yet much to depend on secrecy and dispatch.

I beg leave to repeat to your Lordship my assurance that I have been wholly actuated in my resistance to the above measure by a principle of duty, sensible of the delicacy of the situation I have placed myself in by opposing one of his Excellency's exalted rank, and deservedly high estimation in the eyes of his Majesty's Ministers, entirely confiding in your Lordship's candour for giving full credit to the truth of my assertion.

I have the honour to be, with the highest veneration and respect, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and most humble servant,
PETER RAINIER.

RAINIER TO SPENCER

Arrogant, Bombay Harbour.
10th May, 1801.

My Lord,—My last address to your Lordship of 27th December, 1800, I fear was tediously prolix, to which begging permission to refer, I proceed to inform your Lordship that on my arrival at Colombo from the East I received a letter from Lord Wellesley expressive of much chagrin at my refusal to co-operate with his

Majesty's squadron in the project his Excellency had proposed, and suggesting a variety of arguments tending to prove me in the wrong, and to impress me with the idea that his public consequence and intimate connection with his Majesty's Ministers were more than sufficient to shelter my conduct from any degree of responsibility in the issue. I must confess to your Lordship that I am not in the least convinced by his Excellency's reasonings, and have therefore forbore to make any reply to them, having neither inclination nor leisure to enter into such tedious discussions, the necessity whereof was happily suspended by the alteration in public measures that soon after took place, and was announced to me by his Excellency at the same period. But I discovered his Excellency had for the third time (though none could have been so appropriate as the first) determined on the prosecution of the 5670¹ business, with a more considerable force than was first proposed, as in the event of a refusal of the conditions to be offered, his Excellency had given orders for the immediate attack of the place, and without entertaining the least doubt of its failing and in the assurance that the persuasions he had used had their fullest effect on my mind. The Cormorant was then to have proceeded to the attack of 11.60 79. and 507 9. 221. in the success whereof his Excellency appears to have been equally sanguine. In the case of my refusal to attend it, or give protection to it, it was nevertheless to have gone forward; but fortunately for the security of his Majesty's possessions in this country after orders were

¹ Batavia. These ciphers are not translated in the letters, and I have not been able to find the key. Some are recognisable from the context, and from knowledge of the actual events.

issued for the final departure of the expedition from Trincomalee, which was on the 5th of last February, on the 10th the dispatch of the 6th October, 1800, from the Right Honble. Secretary of State arrived, directing a force to be sent from this country to rendezvous at 220. 6309. on which occasion his Excellency immediately took the resolution of ordering the whole force appointed for the above-mentioned enterprise, with some augmentations, to be employed for that purpose. The Commanding Officer of the troops and Captain Malcolm, on receiving the intelligence from the Presidency of Fort St. George, immediately put the transports in motion from 9493.010. towards the coast of 65 43. under convoy of the Suffolk. Yet from various causes of delay interfering, the first troops collected at Bombay, who were chiefly natives, did not leave it till the 4th of March; the next which followed, being the first division of those who had rendezvoused at 9493, sailed hence on the 1st ultimo; Major-Gen. Baird with another division on the 6th; others followed the 13th; the last sailed from Goa so late as 21st November. It had been agreed upon between the Commanding Officer of the troops and Colonel Malcolm to proceed to Bombay, which at that season is generally a very tedious navigation; they would certainly have reached 6309 in less time had they started off from Mangalore. The plea was grounded on the sickness, particularly the scurvy, that had got among the troops, for want of fresh provisions and refreshments which could not be obtained at 9493, where a murrain had attacked the cattle, of which the greatest part died. The rains also had been uncommonly heavy; but full as good, if not superior, refreshments were

to be expected at 6309, a circumstance they were not acquainted with. It was Captain Malcolm's intention to have proceeded to 2. 6309.2 with them but for the Suffolk's springing a dangerous leak. 'Tis only by a selection of the best sailing transports for the purpose that any number of the troops can be expected to reach 34, 36, 39, 75, 22, 43, 40,¹ and fear they are too late for 97, 53, 08, 81, 8, except those who proceeded with Rear-Admiral Blankett. Whatever difficulties or disasters may occur, the monsoon will be favourable to their return to the end of August at least. One of the Company's cruisers arrived here a little while since, who left 6309.101 the 7th ultimo. Captain Sir Home Popham was not then arrived but could not be long after, as from information received from the Cape of Good Hope he was to leave that place about the 21st February. Part of two regiments destined for that service from hence still remain, and will do so I suppose, as it would answer little purpose to send them forward at this time, and there are urgent demands for their services elsewhere. Had the whole armament proceeded on the distant service I have intimated to your Lordship the consequences could but have been serious, as the embarkation of so considerable a body of European troops has already occasioned some troublesome insurrections among the native powers, an object which in some measure influenced my conduct in the business lately in agitation between his Excellency the Governor-General and myself. Being intimately connected with the ground of the opposition I made I feel no small degree of satisfaction in the reflection that my application to your Lordship to be

¹ Kosseir ?

superseded preceded the period when this difference of opinion on public service appeared.

Copies of the Right Honble. Secretary of State's letters of the 6th October to Lord Wellesley were immediately forwarded on their first arrival here to Rear-Admiral Blankett, who has acknowledged the receipt of them to me in his letter of the 26th February from Jeddah. The cruisers I have mentioned lately arrived from 6309, reported he had sailed from that place, Jeddah, and I am in hourly expectation of the arrival of the armed ship (on whose board the *Orpheus's*¹ guns and great part of her crew were put) agreeable to the Rear-Admiral's promise to me in the letter above quoted.

It was not till some time after my arrival here on the 15th ultimo that I had the honour of meeting your Lordship's favours of 11th May, 28th August, and 5th October, 1800, owing to my not calling at Trincomalee; your Lordship may be assured of my embracing every opportunity to notice the several gentlemen and officers therein recommended for promotion, and have sometime since appointed Lieut. Heywood to the command of the *Vulcan* bomb since become a death vacancy and Lieutenant Evans to the command of the *Hobart*. On the death of Capt. Turnor I have made Capt. Waller post from the *Albatross* into the *Daedalus*, having removed Lieut. Ball into the *Trident*. Lieut. J. G. Vashon I have promoted to the command of the *Albatross*. In the routine of these promotions Mr. W. Russel has been made a Lieutenant and trust they will be honoured with your Lordship's approbation, and the Board's confirmation. Lieut. Lord Grey has not appeared in this country, and Dr. Chalmers

¹ *Orpheus*, 32. Went to the East Indies in 1794.

has been gone home some time, having been dismissed by a Court Martial.

An opportunity has not yet offered of informing Rear-Admiral Blankett with their Lordships' designation respecting his flag, and permission to return to England, but your Lordship will have noticed that he is acquainted with Capt. Sir Home Popham's appointment, and therefore am disposed to think that on that officer's making his appearance, the Rear-Admiral will leave that quarter in the *Leopard*, as Capt. Surridge is senior to Sir Home, before he will receive my further instructions, unless he is otherwise directed by their Lordships' orders.

Little dependence is to be placed on any assistance from the East India Company's cruisers, as your Lordship has suggested, to look after the enemy's privateers, being generally not half manned with Europeans and such as keep near the land-heads are immediately laid hold on for other purposes. Two or three smart cruisers are much wanted to protect the mouth of Rangoon river, in the S.W. monsoon particularly, from whence Bengal and the coast are supplied with teak timber. This trade was very much annoyed last season by only one active but very inconsiderable privateer. I have therefore desired Capt. Waller to withhold the sale of the *La Gloire*, a French privateer he has lately captured, for my inspection, to see whether she is fit for the service above mentioned, and finding her so, to purchase her into the Navy.

I have already given your Lordship full scope to relieve the Honble. Capt. Murray from the difficulty I have offered to his being employed ; although the reasons he has urged in justification of his irregular conduct in the papers your

Lordship refers me to make no impression on my mind, as Lord Hobart and himself are well apprised if his Lordship had not been going home, which was a sudden business, the Fort St. George Government would never have thought of making any application for Colonel Murray's convoy. I waive any further discussion of the matter, as knowing your Lordship's time and attention have subjects of the last importance to engage them for the honour and interests of the country, and therefore but little to spare for considerations of so little moment.

Capt. Astle in a letter dated 8th January last off Timour informs me that at the requisition of the Company's Interior Civil Servant at 11, 54, 58, 67, 36, 73, 83, 92, and the commanding officer of the troops he was going to co-operate with them in an attack in 44, 22, 28, 85, 90, 9.1, 77, 74. Whatever may be the event he has no authority from me as I have always understood our force at the 58, 47, 76, 53, 23, 29, 39 was too weak to countenance any such attempt, and it may be apprehended that even their success will be injurious to our interests among these islands unless they are much on their guard. The answer received by the Governor-General from Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Curtis and Sir Geo. Yonge has fully verified my conjecture expressed to his Excellency on the occasion. The plan of attack on 11, 60 79, 22,¹ in whose success his Excellency was so extremely sanguine, appeared to me when I came to look over it at my leisure, to be utterly impracticable under the circumstances proposed from the various glaring inconsistencies and inaccuracies observable in it, independent of other weighty considerations which would have been necessarily attached to the execution of it.

¹ Probably Mauritius.

Our accounts from England reach to the 30th of January. We hear from the capital of Turkey that the 55, 36, 43, 44, 40, 22 begins to regard our interests with great coolness.

I have the honour to be, with the greatest veneration and respect, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and most humble servant,
PETER RAINIER.

COLONEL T. RUDSDALL TO SPENCER

On board *La Sensible*, Mocha Roads.
10th May, 1801.

My Lord,—I had the honour of writing to your Lordship from the Cape of Good Hope from whence we sailed on 28th of February. We were a week doubling the Cape and had rather rough weather. The *Romney* sprung her fore trestle-tree just as the Mozambique Passage was open to us, it was therefore judged advisable (having a leading wind) to make our voyage that way. It is not a very pleasant navigation. We one night experienced a most violent squall, it came on about midnight and took us with every sail set the ship would carry, in an instant was carried away our fore and mizen top masts, fore-yard and jib-boom, the main top sail sprung and all our sails much damaged, the remainder of the voyage we had very fine weather and light winds. We made the Comoro Islands the 3rd of April. I believe it was Sir H. P.'s intentions to have watered, &c., &c., at Johanna, but we made Mohilla, where by baffling winds, anchoring and weighing and a deal of bother we lost much time, and sailed from thence the 12th without being

completed in wood or water and received little or no stock. There was a difficulty in purchasing cattle, although there appeared plenty of goats and small oxen, some poultry and fruits. A person who called himself King of the island promised to make the necessary arrangements for providing us with everything we wanted, but either he'd not the power or the will to do so. The island was beautiful, a good soil and fertile. From Mohilla we steered for the Cape Bossa and sailed along shore until we doubled Cape Gardafui, we then steered over for Aden, looked in but did not anchor, and arrived here on the 6th of this month. The Romney and Victor got in some hours before us, they took what water and supplies they wanted and sailed for Kosseir on the 8th. We hope to be off to-morrow with the Regulus, a ship hired by Sir H[ome] P[opham] at the Cape. General Baird has been here and sailed for Kosseir on the 29th. The Romney and Victor have been sickly; they buried several men and left some here in the hospital. We have been more fortunate; out of near 300 men I have buried two, one not likely to live when we came on board, and I had the particular satisfaction of reporting every man fit for actual service on our arrival here. General Baird has, I believe, about 4000 men with him and as many more are daily expected here, as will make his army 10,000. The Regiments gone forward are the 10th, 19th, 80th Regiments, detachments of 86th, and 88th, 3 battalions of sepoy and 3 companies of artillery. I am extremely anxious to be with the army, particularly as there is danger of the monsoons changing, in which case we cannot be there in any reasonable time, nor is it at all desirable in this sea to be working against a

contrary wind. I have been a few hours in the town which fully satisfied me ; it is a miserable place indeed. We have, however, good supplies of provisions by the arrangements made in India, but our water is very bad, and that I fear is the case in most of the seaports of this part of the world. General Baird I understand has a complete staff with him : I therefore must not be sanguine in my expectation on that head. I am glad to have it in my power to give your Lordship a good account of my health and with best respects to Lady Spencer have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and obliged humble servant,
THOS. RUDSDALL.

PART IV

THE NORTHERN POWERS

1800 TO 1801

THE DISPUTE WITH DENMARK, JULY 1800, AND
THE SECOND ARMED NEUTRALITY, DECEMBER
1800 AND JANUARY 1801

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THERE is but little correspondence about the disputes with Denmark and the Northern Powers in 1800 and 1801. The few letters from Home Popham give some picture of the preparations made after the seizure of the Freya had produced strained relations with Denmark ; those relating to the dispute with Russia are interesting, *inter alia*, for St. Vincent's opinion that Hyde Parker was the ' only man ' for the Baltic and Lord Whitworth's low opinion of the Russian fleet.¹ The force, in fact, which the Northern Powers could bring against us, though formidable on paper, was in reality of no great strength ; the disadvantages may indeed have been greater from the economic standpoint of fleet supplies than from the purely military one of fighting power ; and when the points at issue were of such vital importance to this Kingdom it is small matter for surprise that Pitt preferred the addition of enemies, of such comparatively small fighting value, to the certain loss of the power effectively to use our national strength which would have followed from an acceptance of the demands made upon us. The reasons upon which he rested his opinion were fundamental in our conception of maritime rights. He denied that free bottoms made free goods, or that convoy of neutrals conferred a right precluding search ; and said that contraband of war ought to include naval as well as military stores, and that ports ought to be considered to be in a state of blockade when it was unsafe for vessels to enter them.

¹ James (vol. iii. p. 43) says : ' Perhaps the effective number, or that which might be brought to act as a fleet, did not exceed 20 sail of the line.'

' Shall we allow entire freedom,' said Pitt, ' to the trade of France? Shall we suffer that country to send out her twelve million of exports and receive her imports in exchange to enlarge private capital and increase the public stock? Shall we allow her to receive naval stores undisturbed and to rebuild and refit that Navy which the valour of our seamen has destroyed? . . . Four nations have leagued to produce a new code of maritime laws, in defiance of the established law of nations, and in defiance of the most solemn treaties and engagements, which they endeavour to force arbitrarily upon Europe.'

The initial difficulty with Denmark over the Freya was settled quickly. Home Popham's letters give a slight sketch of the measures taken off Copenhagen. But it is indicative of the military policy of the day that the prospects of rupture immediately induced thoughts of action against the Danish colonies. The news of the capture of the Danish convoy reached India in December 1800. The Marquis Wellesley at once wrote to Clive saying that action must be taken against Tranquebar at the first moment after news of the rupture arrived, without awaiting orders. Clive should put himself in communication with Admiral Rainier 'and suggest to his Excellency the importance of directing a vigilant attention to the settlement of Tranquebar,' and also of taking proper steps for guarding British commerce against Danish attack in India and China. So, too, when Denmark joined the Northern Coalition, Dundas makes preparations to attack her possessions in the West Indies.¹

St. Vincent, besides considering Hyde Parker the best commander for the Baltic, thinks of his assistants, differentiating between what to-day would be called administration and operations. Writing to Spencer on 23rd January, 1801, he said, 'I learn with pleasure that Captain Domett has recovered his health, and the tone of his nerves with it. He will be invaluable to Sir Hyde Parker, and Lord Nelson will act the fighting part well.' Domett, as much of St. Vincent's correspondence

¹ Dundas to Spencer, 3rd January, 1801. Vol. iii. p. 287.

shows, was one of the most capable administrators, in St. Vincent's opinion, in the fleet.¹ Of the method in which it was proposed to carry out the Baltic operations, St. Vincent was critical. 'Unless he [Hyde Parker] carries 20,000 of the best troops you have under Simcoe, if Sir Charles Grey or Sir Charles Stuart cannot be had, he will do nothing. You know as well as I do that shells thrown from ships are impotent weapons, and will be laughed at when the first consternation is over'²—a wise opinion that events only too nearly justified, as the situation on the afternoon of 2nd August showed. Without Nelson it may well be doubted if the expedition could have been so rapid a success, if, indeed, it would not, as St. Vincent predicted, have failed altogether.

¹ *E.g.*, St. Vincent to Spencer, 25th September, 1800. He is frequently referred to, in high terms, in letters to Nepean.

² St. Vincent to Nepean, 9th February, 1801.

HOME POPHAM TO SPENCER

Romney, off Cronenburg Castle.
16th August, 1800.

My Lord,—I take the chance of this day's mail to say I was sent ahead by Admiral Dickson to make some arrangements, and I expect him here this evening or to-morrow morning. The dispatch cutter left his fleet the day after me, and informed me last night part of the second division had joined him.

There are three Danish 74's and a guardship at Elsineur, one 74 at Copenhagen, and 6 put in commission within this last week and fitting with all possible dispatch.

Two Regiments marched into the castle yesterday and they are taking the trouble of mounting all their guns, that we may have the pleasure of dismounting them ; and I fear the poor unfortunate soldiers will all be buried in the ruins of the castle, if the Government is so unwise as not to concede for the impropriety of its conduct.

I have the honour of remaining, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most faithful
and devoted servant,
HOME POPHAM.

HOME POPHAM TO SPENCER

Romney, off Cronenburg Castle.
17th August, 1800.

My Lord,—I had the honour of writing you a few lines yesterday on the moment of my anchoring to state that Admiral Dickson sent me as his *avant-courier* to communicate at present between

him and Lord Whitworth, and to make such other arrangements as I might think necessary.

I sent Captain Duval yesterday to Copenhagen and he has this moment returned with a letter to Admiral Dickson and a long confidential one to myself. I shall only detain him half an hour to enable me to write to the Admiral, to whom I send Lord Whitworth's letter with permission to transmit it to your Lordship only and in such manner that it is possible he will avail himself of it and send Captain Duval to England in the dispatch cutter. I am anxious you should see the letter as it contains everything possible to be said on the subject. From its contents your Lordship will see there is scarce an alternative; the blow must be struck and it must be a decisive one; and certainly every day of lost time is an advantage to the Danes. Their force is not equal to what I expected and consequently I see ours in rather a more favourable point of view than I did at Yarmouth, though certainly not equal to what I could wish. Four line of battle ships on the roads, a fifth nearly ready at Copenhagen, and this appears at present all the force they have to depend on, for the ships they have ordered to be commissioned since their first *[illegible]* cannot be ready for a length of time. The Russians it is said dismantle their ships on their arrival at Cronstadt and I cannot learn that the Swedes are fitting anything to assist their neighbours.

I have been very much employed since my arrival here in making several arrangements; and after considering the situation of Cronenburg (in which I may differ from others), [and] the position and state of the Danish navy, I am led to hope, if Lord Whitworth finds it necessary

to use the interference of the fleet without any particular loss of time, that we have reason to expect success certain in proportion to the promptness of the demand, and the firmness of the execution.

I wish the last case he states in his letter had been provided for, as the 'pugnare manû' under the present circumstances, would have been more effectual than the 'fictum contentio verborum,' and would have brought the great question to an immediate issue. I write this, my Lord, to take the chance of the Admiral's sending a dispatch. My public communication, which merely amounts to my arriving here, preparing the convoy to sail, and noticing an order from Admiral Dickson to write the Danish Commodore about his coming in here, will go by another opportunity.

Under the presumption that the Admiral would come in, and that it might be afterwards necessary to act, I have, as he desired me on all occasions, given him my opinion very freely. The Monarch and three 64's to anchor in a situation to act with the four line of battle ships, the Glatton as near the Castle as is decent; one bomb where the Romney now is, 2 miles N. $\frac{3}{4}$ E. from the Castle; the Isis and Romney with the other bombs and smaller vessels in the rear of the squadron in Elsinour road, ready to run up and bombard Copenhagen; and I have undertaken the pilotage up. I do not think the Danish force is well disposed of. It ought to be in the narrow seas near the capital and the greatest part ought not to be subject to be cut off. That will eventually be the better game for us to play, as striking at the vitals of the country; for if that comes to terms the outpost must do so.

I wish [I] had time to give you my ideas more fully, but I trust you will excuse me for writing in such haste as I am anxious to get Captain Duval off, and very much prepared just now.

I act with great pleasure and much confidence because I believe very firmly your Lordship is satisfied of my opinions in general, and my steady zeal for the honour of my patrons and the credit of my country. I have been always very candid with your Lordship as to my own situation and my views ; and I assure you I shall in this and every other case try to continue and more particularly to fix your protection to your Lordship's very faithful servant,

HOME POPHAM.

HOME POPHAM TO SPENCER

Romney, half-way between
Copenhagen and Elsinour.
21st August, 1800.

My Lord,—When I wrote to you on Sunday, I thought it very possible that Admiral Dickson would have dispatched Captain Duval to England before he came to the Sound ; I however let that letter go as it will inform your Lordship of my opinion and sentiments to that period. I have since then had little occasion to alter. In the correspondence I have had with the Commodore, which has been sent to the Board, you will observe I have paid every attention to keep up a good and proper understanding between the two Courts ; certainly to the interest of both, though Denmark would suffer the most by a contrary line of conduct. Lord Whitworth and the Admiral met to-day on board the Romney to make their final arrangement which at my

particular recommendation to Lord Whitworth is to be sent home without a moment's loss of time. You must be aware of my reasons for having done so, as you will see the instant I was dispatched, councils were held in the fleet and no stability whatever in any respect. The Admiral is very solicitous to do what is right, but probably his time of life has rendered him less steady in his resolutions than he was some years ago. If the present arrangement does not meet your approbation I must confess myself ready to receive your censure. My own opinion as to the strength of *Elsineur* differs from others ; and I fear the Admiral appreciates too highly its importance to the enemy. Under this impression I told him to look to the Capital, to keep his squadron in the rear of the four line of battle ships,¹ ready to act upon them or assist in covering me at Copenhagen where I am instantly going, and consequently he would avoid any discussion with the Castle, which must always depend on the Capital: for the Capital once brought to terms, the outposts are obliged to submit. This will be a demonstration, and at this moment very materially support Lord Whitworth in his negotiation, and I have no doubt but the Admiral will keep his position so long as it is physically safe to do so or till he hears further from England. I have hitherto had the most difficult card of my life to play and I hope I may continue to go on as well as I trust you will think I have hitherto done. Lord Whitworth has apprised me of his most perfect approbation and that he has reported my conduct to Lord Grenville, which I have no doubt will come to your Lordship's view. In regard to my military part of the story I feel

¹ That is, the line of Danish battleships.

perfectly easy as I have no doubt of burning or destroying both town and fleet ; but as far as depends on me previously to such act you may rely on it I shall do all in my power to conciliate and keep in every case on terms of the greatest amity and friendship with the Danish officers.

Admiral Dickson has signified his intention of sending me home as soon as the matter is settled amicably and when I have the pleasure of seeing your Lordship I shall be able to enter more fully into detail.

I have the honour always to remain,

Your Lordship's most faithful

devoted servant,

HOME POPHAM.

SPENCER TO HOME POPHAM

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

25th August, 1800.

Dear Sir,—I have not before now had a convenient opportunity of acknowledging and thanking you for your letter of the 5th August ; the contents of it were very satisfactory and I hope the same cordiality and good understanding will go on.

I trust that the imposing force which Admiral Dickson will have when Captain Graves's squadron joins him will completely settle this business ; but if it should not I do not despair of encountering with success everything which the three Northern Powers can bring against us. The point for which we are contending must not be given up.

Yours very faithfully,

SPENCER.

THE KING TO EARL SPENCER

Weymouth. 6th September, 1800.

I am much pleased the contest with Denmark has been adjusted without the necessity of coming to blows. Earl Spencer will certainly concur with me in thinking Vice-Admiral Dickson's conduct has been prudent and judicious.

GEORGE R.

SPENCER TO ST. VINCENT

28th November, 1800.

My dear Lord,— . . . Your Lordship has no doubt heard from Lord Nelson since his arrival in this country; it gave me very great satisfaction to find that he had no sooner set his feet in it than he applied in the most pressing manner for service; and expressed the strongest wish to serve under your Lordship's command. I have accordingly sent Captain Hardy down to the *Namur* to get acquainted with that ship's company preparatory to their being turned over to the *San Josef*, which ship I consider (unless you had yourself wished for her) to be Nelson's peculiar right. I have, however, at the same time told him that if his services should be required in a smaller ship he will of course not think himself ill-treated by being removed into one.

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The hostile measure taken by the Emperor of Russia (which will, I fear, deprive us of a considerable quantity of hemp) will make it necessary to economise our stores as much as possible, and a circular order to that effect has

accordingly been issued. Your Lordship will also receive an instruction founded on our late intelligence from Brest, which I hope will enable us to get our ships in as perfect an order as possible in point of repairs against the opening of the weather after the winter, when it is not improbable that we may have a more extended naval war on our hands than we have ever yet had; on this subject I propose by and by to write more fully. I shall now add nothing further but that I am ever, my dear Lord,

Your very faithful humble servant,
SPENCER.

ST. VINCENT TO SPENCER

Tor Abbey. 7th December, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I have the satisfaction to acquaint you that my health is rapidly improved by riding exercise and the cheerful scenes which surround us, so that I hope your Lordship will get six months more service out of me.

Should the Northern Powers continue their menacing posture, Sir Hyde Parker is the only man you have to face them. He is in possession of all the information obtained during the Russian armament, more particularly that which relates to the navigation of the Great Belt; and the *Victory* will be a famous ship for him being by far the handiest I ever set my foot in, sailing remarkably fast and being of easy draft of water; Rear-Admiral Whitshed told me a few days ago he and his brother-in-law Bentinck sounded the Great Belt and found it very practicable.

Yours most faithfully,
ST. VINCENT.

LORD WHITWORTH TO SPENCER

Somerset Street. 18th December, 1800.

My Lord,—I am sorry I have not to offer your Lordship a detailed list of the Russian naval force in the Baltic, but I can from recollection state the amount of line of battle ships to be about forty-five. Of these one may reckon seven or eight to be tolerable good, having been built during my residence in Russia, although it is to be observed that two out of three which were launched last spring, and which were denominated a part of the Maltese squadron, had their backs completely broken in [*illegible*]. We may however reckon seven or eight tolerably good as far at least as age goes, twenty-two in the state of the worst of those which were in England, that is to say, tolerable good looking, but in want of the most essential repairs, and the remainder good for nothing at all, and considered for many years as unserviceable; of these about thirty-two, including the unserviceable ones, are kept at Cronstadt, and the remainder at Revel.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

and most humble servant,

WHITWORTH.

HYDE PARKER TO SPENCER

Cumberland Place. 11th January, 1801.

My Lord,—Having received your Lordship's commands to state my ideas as to the intended service of the Baltic, I beg leave to observe the force of the fleet to be employed must depend

upon your Lordship as to the line of battle, as that can only arise from the intelligence and information of the force likely to be opposed to it by the enemy, of which your Lordship can only be the judge. But as every obstacle is supposed to be given by the enemy to the progress of the fleet in an intricate navigation, such as the removal of all buoys and beacons joined to the opposition of a powerful flotilla, it will be absolutely necessary to have a very strong force of a similar kind for an advance guard, to secure the vessels with the pilots that it may be necessary to lay upon shoals, &c. Of those, the enemy may remove the usual marks as also to guard the fleet from insult of the enemy's gunboats, galleys and fireships, of which I have every reason to believe they have a great number. Upon this ground I beg leave to suggest to your Lordship the preparing six colliers, by cutting off their upper works and laying a deck about four feet from the water's edge strong enough to enable them to mount from eighteen to twenty guns, twenty-four pounders. These vessels I calculate when cut down would draw from eleven to thirteen feet water, and would be capable not only to cover the smaller vessels, such as bombs, fireships, and gunboats in shoal water, but may also be employed as floating batteries against low batteries, on ships in a mole, or confined navigation. Four or six bombs and six fireships will be necessary for the services likely to occur. The fleet to be victualled for five months and supplied with an additional anchor and cable, between the bower and stream anchors, this latter not being of sufficient weight to heave a ship off by, when ashore, nor to be trusted to ride by; whereas the bower anchor

is too heavy for the ships' launches to carry out in the event of a ship getting aground ; but the coasting anchor, as commonly called, will be carried out with ease by the launch, and the ship in tideway and confined channels may be trusted to ride by, or moored by carrying it out in a launch in a narrow channel, where there may not be room to bear away in the usual way. Six or eight good sailing armed cutters or luggers to act as dispatch boats, or as beacons to lay upon the several shoals and rocks. With these assistants I cannot but conceive the fleet will be able to make its way against every opposition the enemy can throw. Lieutenant Wm. Lamb was the officer that commanded the Kite cutter employed upon the survey of the passage of the Great Belt.

I have the honour to be, my Lord, with the highest respect,

Your Lordship's most obedient
and very humble servant,
H. PARKER.

SPENCER TO WARREN ¹

PRIVATE.

Admiralty. 15th January, 1801.

Dear Sir,—I take the earliest opportunity of acknowledging your letter of the 16th December which reached me to-day. I am glad to find that the chance of service has thrown you into the situation which you like best. You have a very important task to perform, I assure you, for in the new state of affairs which the unfortunate issue of the Continental Campaign, and the

¹ Warren had just been appointed to the command of a squadron in the Mediterranean.

hostile complexion of the Northern Powers have produced, it is far from improbable that very active attempts may be made by the enemy to get possession of the entrance into the Mediterranean, at least so as to command it and to cut off our communication with our force in that sea. I need not tell you how essential it is to us that any such intention of theirs should be frustrated, and I have no doubt of your using every possible exertion with this view.

I have only time to add that I am, dear Sir,
Your very faithful humble servant,
SPENCER.

LIEUT. THESIGER TO SPENCER

Received 3rd February.

Excellent, Quiberon Bay.
16th January, 1801.

My Lord,—I beg leave to add, in addition to what I stated in answer to your Lordship's letter of the 15th December, that a number of small vessels may prove of the utmost service in an expedition in the East Sea, to counteract the disposition their galley fleet may make, which is numerous, and further, my Lord, to be stationed as beacons along the banks, as I presume the Russians will remove theirs, as soon as they perceive our force advancing from the Island of Hogland, and I beg leave, my Lord, to premise that I am of opinion that fireships may be used with success against the enemy, particularly at the Port of Revel, where the harbour is composed of wood, and should we get a force up before the Russians haul into the Road I think, my Lord, the whole of the squadron, with the harbour, may be destroyed by fireships, and they

may be also used with good effect in the Road of Cronstadt. Bomb-ketches, my Lord, I think may be used with advantage also.

I have the honour to be, my Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient
humble servant,

FREDERICK THESIGER.

SPENCER TO ST. VINCENT

[*Copy.*]

Admiralty. 26th January, 1801.

My dear Lord,—I understand that Captain Geo. Murray of the *Achilles* is extremely well acquainted with the Belt and the Baltic navigation and would for that reason be peculiarly adapted to the service in that part of the world; his ship, however, is of a class which ought to remain in the Channel Fleet, and I should therefore propose (if you have no material objection to it) that he should change with any of the captains of the 74's which your Lordship and the officers concerned in the exchange may fix upon for the ensuing Northern campaign.

The *Windsor Castle* I have good reason to suppose will not be acceptable to either of the flag officers who are to have three-deckers in the Baltic Fleet, therefore we should be obliged to select some other of as little draft of water instead of her.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Your very faithful humble servant,

SPENCER.

I am quite vexed at not having yet been able to find a proper opening in a frigate for Mr. Preston, but he shall have the first at my disposal.

PART V

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

JUNE 1800 TO FEBRUARY 1801

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THERE are not many letters of a general nature in the period between June 1800 and February 1801. It is instructive to see Home Popham returning to his plans for attack upon Holland, and the reasoning with which he supports them. The requirements in small crafts of all kinds, referred to in earlier sections of the Papers, receive further emphasis from the table of captures made by the enemy in the American and French wars, and in Warren's memorandum on Gibraltar with Spencer's reply.

DUNDAS TO SPENCER

Wimbledon. 20th June, 1800.

My dear Lord,—I wish you would send for Sir Home Popham, and have a private conference with him on the subject of his project on the Island of Scowen, and after you have satisfied yourself upon it, I would wish to have a conversation with you that I may know how to direct my operations with a view to it. I have an answer from the King, apparently with a very cordial approbation of the minute of the Cabinet, which I sent to him last night. I am the more I think of it the more dissatisfied with our decision in not sending a larger force to the Mediterranean. I can figure many very probable contingencies in which it would be of the greatest moment to have such a force there; it is, however, too long a chapter for present discussion. I am going this day to Holwood on my way to Coombank, and shall not return here again till Tuesday next.

I remain, my dear Lord,

Yours sincerely,

HENRY DUNDAS.

POPHAM TO SPENCER

Chertsey. 11th July 1800.

My Lord,—I began the accompanying Memoirs soon after I had the honour of talking to your Lordship on the subject, but the unpleasant news from Italy arriving the following day, I waited the result from Vienna with some little impatience,

but this westerly wind seems so obstinate that I am induced to trouble your Lordship with the ideas I had under every case that might arise in a general or partial war or peace.

I have the honour of remaining with every respect and attachment, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most devoted
and much obliged servant,
HOME POPHAM.

MEMORANDUM

I trust it will be allowed that since I first had the honour of being admitted to the confidence of his Majesty's Ministers I have been firm in my opinion that no enterprise can be attended with so much advantage to ourselves as forcing an establishment in some part of Holland, and the more I consider this, the more I am convinced of the propriety of such a measure. Holland has been a source of wealth to the French Government, and as her treasures are by no means exhausted, the first Consul will suffer more by an infraction in that country than any other under his control.

A position there, particularly if it has the advantage of a port, must operate as a strong demonstration in favour of our allies, and oblige the enemy to keep a formidable garrison in Breda, Bergen-op-zoom, Klundert, Williamstadt, and many other places, because it is impossible for him to calculate on the extent of our intentions with so large a disposable force as there is at present in England ; and the success which I think will attend our operations in the instance

I am about to propose, will stimulate the Austrians to push forward towards the Low Countries, and give spirit and energy to its army on the Rhine.

Walcheren has been always represented by me as a situation of more than common importance to this country, and although I have no doubt of eventually obtaining possession of it without any material loss, yet I think it would be rash and inconsistent to propose such an expedition before we have some stronghold that can be obtained by secrecy and surprise, from whence all our subsequent movements can be directed according to the information which may be received on the spot.

If any conclusions can be drawn from the conversations I have had, in Norway, Sweden and Russia, it is not fair to judge of the disposition of the people in Holland from the result of last year, and on that account I cannot but feel satisfied that the apparent deception was more owing to the critical situation of the army, and the unfavourable ground which it occupied, than any other cause. On my first mission to Russia I pressed for Mr. Dundas's consideration the propriety of taking possession of Schowen, Duyveland, North Beveland, and probably Woolversdyk ; and I did this upon conviction that little anxiety would attend such an enterprise, as these islands abstractedly never could be considered as worthy of our attention, and consequently left in such a defenceless state that they might, and may at present, be got possession of in a very few hours, and most likely without any loss, provided the subject is kept secret and when determined on is carried into effect with promptness and vigour.

When it is known that Schowen and Duyveland are carried, the enemy will naturally become jealous of Walcheren and Voorn, and will equally apprehend hostile intentions against Dutch Brabant and Austrian Flanders, but this, more under the idea of those provinces rising again than the fear of any direct invasion.¹

When we are in possession of these islands his Majesty's Ministers will be better able to decide, from the information they will then receive and their own political views, whether this expedition should be considered merely as a demonstration to favour other operations, or whether it will lead to an advantageous employment of all the disposable force in England. I am inclined to the latter suggestion, not from the impulse of a moment, but from a serious consideration of the subject for some years; but taking it only as a demonstration I very much doubt if any other spot could be pointed out so answerable to the purpose in every point of view, for the enemy is vulnerable in all directions, and 6000 British troops so centrally placed, with an active flotilla and enterprising men, will oblige at least twenty thousand additional men to be kept in the different garrisons and islands to prevent their falling into our hands by a *coup de main*.

What I have already said about the Island of Schowen principally applies to the carrying on of offensive measures; but reasons still more urgent may be adduced to encourage this enterprise, as a position towards Walcheren, even if the situation of the Austrian armies obliges the

¹ *Marginal note.*—This part was written before the Austrians were beaten in Italy, but if they make peace some alteration will be necessary to obtain the object of this Memoir.

Court of Vienna to enter into a negotiation with the first Consul and that the rest of our allies secede *in toto* from the war. Suppose a peace with the German Empire. The French will then have 200,000 disposable troops, and without entering at all into the views of Buonaparte towards Greece, or the relief of Kléber, where his honour, his glory and his pride are so much at stake, it is fair to presume that a greater part of this force will be marched to the western coasts where it will keep in awe every sentiment of loyalty, and threaten Great Britain a second time with an invasion from the Ems to Cape Finisterre ; a view of this extent of coast will be sufficient to demonstrate how important it is to break so formidable a line of attack.

In looking to the third and last case, which is, [if] after a secession of all our allies, it should be thought expedient to accede to any pacific intercourse, the possession of Walcheren will facilitate our enforcing some restrictions in regard to the navigation of the Scheldt ; for there can be no doubt, especially as the port of Ostend is so much destroyed, that all Brabant and Flanders will try to have Antwerp made a free port, which will open an avenue to a great East Indian trade, and a source of employment and nursery for French, Flemish and Dutch seamen.

I have given my reasons as concise as possible under the three heads which the advantage of this expedition seem principally to attach ; but I cannot conclude without recurring again to the first case, however improbable it now appears—the continuance of the war on Germany ; if so, what other diversion can be made so favourable to our allies ? How can such a force be more beneficially employed, especially when the operations

in question are confined to islands where the troops are not exposed to the disasters attending a campaign on an extensive continent?

The Government of this country has been always so attentive to the interest of the Stadtholder and his family that it is unnecessary to enlarge on the chance of some terms of compensation being agreed on for those Princes, provided the islands are in our possession at the conclusion of the war, but I do not think the idea altogether too improbable to pass unnoticed.

HOME POPHAM.

SPENCER TO KINGSMILL

Admiralty. 15th August, 1800.

Dear Sir,—The period for which you have held the command on the Irish Station having now long exceeded that which in similar instances has been usual, and the circumstances of the service requiring a new arrangement, I take the earliest opportunity of apprising you that it is in contemplation in the course of about a month or six weeks to relieve you, by the appointment of another flag officer to that command. I cannot however do this without assuring you in the strongest manner of the satisfaction I have experienced of communicating with you both publicly and privately, during the time in which it has been my duty to do so on the various subjects relating to your command, and of the sense I feel of the attention and zeal which you have manifested on the conduct of it.

With the above sentiment I shall think it no more than what I owe to you and the service

humbly to represent your conduct to his Majesty, and to solicit him to bestow some mark of his Royal approbation on you upon your quitting your present station.

I am, dear Sir, with very great truth,

Your very obedient humble servant,

SPENCER.

YOUNG TO SPENCER

Admiralty. 11th September, 1800.

My Lord,—There has not anything occurred since your Lordship left town worth troubling you with a letter about it, but I received yesterday a letter from Lord Keith, who is very desirous of having a ship for his flag, and another Admiral sent out to him. He says he has much to do, and has not his people about him nor anything in comfort, which must be true; but I do not now see just how we can afford him another ship. He writes as if he felt himself unequal to the command with which so much of politics is blended, complains of the slowness of all those he is concerned with, and says if anyone more equal to the task should be sent out, he should be well pleased to be quiet: but I fancy one more equal to the task will not be easily found. The Queen of Naples was so much offended at Keith's saying the ships must be employed on the public service, that she would not look at him when she landed. He showed her, however, every possible attention and respect.

I have a letter to-day from Warren who laments that all their zealous efforts at Ferrol should have been thrown away. He recommends

that on any future occasion more determined and more enterprising heroes who would embrace the favourable moment should be chosen. He intends going with the troopships as far as [Gibraltar]. He supposes he may have a better cruise back again, for I can discover no advantage to the public in his doing so. He seems tired of the cruising and hopes to be allowed to pass some time with his family when his ship is ordered into port.

My best respects to Lady Spencer,

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's faithful

and obedient servant,

W. YOUNG.

NEPEAN TO SPENCER

7th October, 1800.

My dear Lord,—Hammond has seen Otto to-day, who informed him that the events which had taken place rendered it unnecessary for him to talk to him further on the subject of the naval armistice (meaning the extension of the armistice with the [French] and the consequences arising from it, and the surrender of Malta) and that he had been charged by his Government to state that if this country wished to treat for a separate peace, a *projet* would be sent to him to communicate to any person here who might be appointed to receive it; or, that he would be ready to forward to the French Government any from hence, adding at the same time that if it should be more agreeable to us to send a *projet* to Paris,

any person we might authorise to treat would be received. This I understand was the purport of the communication, and that he declined the giving any paper to that effect.

He mentioned that he had known of the surrender of Malta seven or eight days.

Believe me to be, your Lordship's
faithful humble servant,
EVAN NEPEAN.

P.S.—We shall send off to the Mediterranean to-day.

CAPTAIN COLNETT TO SPENCER

30th November, 1800.

My Lord,—Considering as I do the apparent hostile intentions of Russia likely to become seriously dangerous to this country, should the Emperor Paul be induced to join his ambitious views with Buonaparte for the destruction of the commerce of this country, I flatter myself your Lordship will permit me to recall to your recollection the means which the Chief Consul would desire from Russia to annoy, and probably the grand plan would be to menace our East India Settlements with an attack from Kamschatka and those parts, as suggested to you, my Lord, in my memoir of the 21st of last August, at the same time Buonaparte is following up the same plan in Egypt.

Your Lordship knows that the Russians have not been idle lately on the N.W. coast of America, or on the N.E. side of Asia, making establishments, building storehouses and barracks for

large armies. The new charter granted by the present Emperor of Russia for establishing an American and Asiatic Company of Merchants will serve as a proof of some digested intentions in that quarter of the world ; and should their apparent new connection with France be consolidated by an alliance it will give them an opportunity, while Buonaparte is approaching India by Egypt, for the Russians to co-operate, by invading and making conquest of the Japan Isles, by which means they would obtain immense riches, together with craft sufficient to transport an army from thence, sufficient with every necessary for any expedition, and by taking the advantage of the N.E. monsoon to carry them out of those seas, they might proceed to any part of India, and complete the execution of their designs. From my knowledge of those seas, I beg leave again to offer my humble services to your Lordship, either to watch the progress of the Russians or to upset the favourite project of the Emperor by destroying their new settlements in Asia and N.W. America.

I should be very happy to await upon you, my Lord, to explain, if necessary, any part of my ideas, and should your Lordship do me the honour to employ me on this service, or any other, my utmost study will be to prove myself worthy your Lordship's patronage and protection,

Having the honour to be

Your Lordship's most obedient
and humble servant,
J. COLNETT.

ABSTRACT OF THE NUMBER OF CAPTURES MADE
BY THE ENEMY DURING THE AMERICAN
AND THE PRESENT WAR

Admiralty. 7th December, 1800.

American War.				Present War.				
Year.	Taken.	Re-taken.	Ran-somed.	Year.	Taken.	Retaken.	Ran-somed.	
1776	235	27	...	1793	233	63	...	
1777	340	65	...	1794	526	88	...	
1778	364	66	16	1795	491	47	...	
1779	597	78	89	1796	414	63	...	
1780	570	77	201	To 5th Sept.,	562	115	} 222 ...	
1781	741	109	160	1797	1048	30		
1782	448	66	41	To 20th Mar.,				168
1783	91	7	...	1798				318
				To 31st Dec.,				
				1798		77		
				1799	404	91	...	
				To 25th Nov.,	356	99	...	
				1800				
3386 495 507				3472 673				
Deduct 495				Deduct 673				
2891				2799				

REPORT ON GIBRALTAR

From Sir J. B. Warren, December 1900

The situation of Gibraltar being at the mouth of the Straits and the first rendezvous of all the trade and merchantmen bound to the Mediterranean, renders it of utmost importance to Great Britain; but from its vicinity to the Spanish ports of Algeciras and Cadiz it is continually exposed to depredations and insult from the small cruisers of the enemy and their gunboats which are built upon a construction peculiarly adapted to these seas; and as the garrison is furnished with cattle and refreshments from

the coast of Barbary the vessels which carry these supplies are obliged to be convoyed from Gibraltar to Tangier, as well as upon their return to the former place : whenever, therefore, ships-of-war are wanting for this purpose, a sufficient quantity of provisions cannot be obtained.

I am sorry to observe that in general, few, if any small vessels-of-war have been left at Gibraltar by the different naval officers owing to the exigency of service or change of system ; and those which have been occasionally left from time to time were ill-calculated for such employ. The consequence of which has been that every convoy or small vessel sent with dispatches has been insulted and many of them taken. The port of Algeciras is at this moment filled with British merchantmen and vessels whose cargoes upon a moderate calculation are estimated at 5 or 600,000 pounds sterling : this, besides the severe loss to the merchants, is disgraceful in the eyes of the garrison, under sight of the British flag.

To obviate these misfortunes I should propose that a brig-sloop-of-war like the Sylph, carrying 10-pound carronades and two long 12-pounders be stationed at the port, as senior officer of the light squadron for the protection of the Straits, and convoy of provision from Barbary ; to have under his command four schooners like the Milbrook and Netley, who should each be furnished with one long 24-pounder to be transported as occasion may require from the bow to the stern, and in addition to the carronades these vessels usually carry, they should also be well fitted with long sweeps for rowing in calms, and the men constantly exercised with them, and firing at a low mark with the 24-pounders.

If schooners could not be obtained, four of the best of the brig-gunboats which are in England, and commanded by lieutenants might do ; but they should have one heavy gun each as before mentioned, which should be fitted to move as far aft in gales of wind as the midship part of the vessel. These five vessels, with the two remaining gunboats already here, which should be manned with proper crews, and that have lieutenants commanding them, should be under the orders of the Master and Commander appointed for the service : who should on no account be removed except in cases of promotion, from this particular and essential service, or station, but act within the Straits under the Admiral upon the spot or, as circumstances may require, at the request of the Governor : but the vessels comprising this squadron should not be sent by any commanding officer from the station, or upon other service : except once a week a brig might be spared, if she sailed sufficiently well, to go as far as Faro, near Cape St. Mary's, for the correspondence which might be kept up between the garrison and squadron here, and England by Lisbon, as there is a British Consul already at Faro who could superintend this service, and forward all letters and dispatches through Portugal.

The small squadron before specified should be confined to cruising in the Straits and Gut as far as Trafalgar on one side, and Ceuta on the other ; and whenever a westerly wind prevailed, or convoys were expected, they should be stationed or anchored in the evenings in Tangier Bay under the land, so as to stretch out and protect the merchantmen and small vessels coming in, from the French and Spanish privateers,

which usually come out in calms or fine weather, and lay under Cabareta Point : they should also escort victuallers to and from Barbary with supplies for the garrison, and keep the mouth of the Gut clear of the enemy's cruisers.

Encouragement should be given to the officers and men who distinguish themselves on this service, which is different in its kind from most others.

J. WARREN.

Note by Spencer, 15th January, 1801

Your paper on the Gibraltar station is exactly conformable to the representations we have already had from every officer who has commanded there ; but the means of supplying a force of the description you mention are unfortunately wanting and now more so than ever, as we have more than ever the want of similar means on every part of our home stations, as well as many of our foreign ones.

*Anonymous proposal, undated—about
February 1801*

My Lord,—Should the recollection occur of my having troubled your Lordship on the subject of an attack on Cadiz some time ago, I trust it will be accompanied with your forgiveness for a zeal, at least honest, though perhaps misapplied.

The late attempt encourages me to entertain such a hope ; and I feel a confidence that the attack will be renewed, not only from a conviction of the necessity of precluding France from enjoying any advantages from the possession of the remainder of the Spanish fleet, but to

secure a supply of naval stores which such an acquisition would afford, and now rendered doubly necessary from the proceedings of Russia ; her disposition rendering such an object of some magnitude.

But, my Lord, my intention is not to begin this address by the foregoing subject : it is to call your Lordship's attention, if I may so presume, to the peculiar situation of the Russian fleet in the Bosphorus, supposing it to remain there, and intended for some latent if not avowed purpose. To secure such a fleet and the troops on board or attached to it, would be of incalculable advantages, not merely in an offensive operation—to check, if not annihilate, the naval power of Russia in that quarter—but it might, perhaps should, only be held as a pledge for the security of the British subjects and property seized by that power ; little aware possibly of our inclination, or indeed means of effecting this object.

After such a preface your Lordship may expect some plan to be proposed. Supposing myself, therefore, to advise in such a case, I should recommend that a squadron adequate for the purpose should be dispatched to the Bosphorus from hence *direct*, without the measure being known till the fleet were at Malta, where they should stop for any further instructions : and not finding any, the sealed instructions should be opened, and not a moment's delay should attend the execution of them. A proper officer is therefore to be selected and he should (while on this service) be independent of any other commanding officer. Perhaps a personal communication might be necessary, though I should not recommend it ; taking care that

such officers and means should be supplied him and be referred to in the instructions as would be necessary. It has been proved that it is impossible to keep our expeditions a secret, and secrecy will be the soul of this business. I suppose the Russian fleet secured, but if not it should be pursued to the Russian ports and with every national vessel be captured. Under such circumstances half measures are worse than none—palliatives are only provocative to further injury and insult. Hence would it be advisable that every source of disturbing the Mediterranean should be either destroyed or removed.

This expedition is to be effected within 10 weeks or 3 months, and afterwards this squadron would return with or without prizes as circumstances may admit, but there should not be any delay that could not be accounted for, for *wise* and *efficient* purposes, as by that period it is too probable, but there will be required a force of some consequence to act with the same energy and spirit in the Baltic. My Lord! the fleet is equal to such undertakings, but you must not hamper them with an army. Witness Ferrol! However this may be wrong—none can judge so well as those who know *all* the circumstances and insinuations are ever to be guarded against.

If the troops are with the Russian fleet, you may succeed in obtaining them as a reinforcement to your own army, since it is known full well that the Russians will readily enter into our service, if not to fight against Russia, and are good subjects when incorporated with our own soldiers and sailors to a certain degree. The artificers on board their ships are always ready to enter our service. They at least will be useful. The rest of these people, if political, may, with

an exception of the officers, be landed easily in the Crimea ; the principal officers should be sent to England.

In respect to the attack on Cadiz. Its importance is not what it was when the subject was obtruded on your Lordship from the French having so many of their best ships. It is to prevent their having the whole, and (what is now to us of real consequence) the naval stores, as neither a cord nor a stick nor anything that could float should be left if success was to attend our arms, of which there would not have been a doubt if we had persevered. Indeed, my Lord, you'll find the enemy no better prepared on a future day, consequently there is every hope. The task (and it is a most difficult one) is to select the proper officers ; a name is always of importance. The Navy affords many matchless examples of skill, gallantry and prudence. I need not name Earl St. Vincent or Lord Nelson and many others. Lord Nelson has the infirmities of human nature that have excited some concern, yet there is a charm attached to popular opinion, and past experience may have operated as a remedy to what we may have much to complain of. Well, you'll say a naval officer alone will not be sufficient. It is true, my Lord, but are there no officers in the army worthy of selection for such an object ? Surely many ! I once reminded you of Genl. Coote ; he has experience and is beloved from having spirit and gallantry. Sir J. Pulteney cannot complain. He was detached to Ferrol and returned with the odium, I will not add more, of his fellow subjects under arms.

The publicity of this failure with all the circumstances is ever to be lamented, because to

have it explained may possibly prove the remedy worse than the evil; and retrospection seldom effects any good purpose under such circumstances.

My purpose is foreign to any other investigation than of such points but which lead to the seizing of the Russian fleet in the Bosphorus, and, if necessary, further proceedings against that power in the Black Sea.

Allow me, however, to add my renewed entreaties to pursue the attack on Cadiz and Ferrol. Not to injure the inhabitants, or retain possession of such places, but to secure all that can be converted to the purpose of our marine.

It must be much out of my province to suggest the means and when these attacks should be made. This moment is perhaps of all others the most favourable. The French are incapable of moving from Brest, if *they had the inclination*, which it is well known they have not. An army is prepared at Lisbon. The additions to it are sent from home easily by the ships that may be so well employed and that otherwise would be idle. This service would be effected, *if at all*, in *three* months, but say it would be April before this expedition could return. You could not before then send any expedition to the Baltic, and *possibly* before then Russia may have repented of her conduct; but I am one who doubt if she ought to be allowed to repent till she is crippled in her marine as effectually at least as far as we have from a confidence in her integrity been the means of raising it; and this, with the shock her trade must receive, may produce a revolution that cannot be otherwise than favourable to England.

I dare not arrogate to myself any claim to your Lordship's attention respecting Egypt. The

world believes Sir R. Abercromby is there, or nearly so, by this time. If he is before April your Lordship will have the favourable accounts of the remnants of the French being landed in France by capitulation, as Menou will be glad of so favourable an opportunity of quitting Egypt, which he will do at last with some *éclat*, having brought so large a force to compel him if necessary.

It is now time that I should solicit, as I humbly do, your Lordship's excuse for this freedom, as well as for the crude and innocent manner I have proceeded to encroach on your Lordship's time. Leisure you cannot have, I am fully sensible, and this will be my apology for urging your Lordship briefly to oppose any temporising measures with Russia. An individual as well [as] a nation best supports its dignity by decision and prompt execution. Unknown to your Lordship I can have no cause to expect anything further than my wishes may succeed—they are for the glory of my country and for the credit of your Lordship !

THE KING TO SPENCER

Windsor. 9th February, 1801.

The uniform conduct of Earl Spencer since I have had the pleasure of having [him] in my service, as well as the real good opinion I had of his character at all times, makes me particularly feel reluctant in consenting to his retiring from his present employment. He knows so well that it is a principle of the strongest nature, that of religious and political duty, that has alone guided

the King through the present most unpleasant scene, that it is unnecessary to add more on the present occasion.

GEORGE R.

PITT TO SPENCER

Park Place. 1st October, 1801.

My dear Lord,—Lest the intelligence should not reach you so soon from any other quarter, I cannot omit to inform you that our long suspense is at an end, and the Preliminaries are just now actually signed. We are to retain Ceylon and Trinidad, the Cape is restored (as a free port), and all the other possessions of France and her allies. Malta is to be given back to the Order, and to be independent both of Great Britain and France, and under the protection of some third power to be agreed upon, which I hope will be Russia. Egypt is to be restored to the Porte, whose dominions as well as those of Naples and Portugal (with the exception of some trifling change of limits on the Spanish frontier and that of Brazil) are to be guaranteed in the state in which they stood before the war. I shall be anxious to know what you think of these conditions. On the whole I see nothing very materially to regret but the loss of the Cape; and even important as that is, I think the terms may be considered as on the whole highly creditable, and, with respect to the East and West Indies, very advantageous. The protection given to helpless allies places the character of the country on high ground, and makes our concessions, though great, appear a sacrifice to good faith and generosity, rather than the effect

of timidity and weakness. At least this is the view I am inclined to take of the subject, and it will be a great satisfaction to me indeed if I find it coincides with yours.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Ever sincerely and faithfully yours,

W. PITT.

The signature has only just taken place and will not be publicly known till to-morrow.

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